

THE COMING
OF PEACE

BY GERHART
HAUPTMANN

TRANSLATED
BY
ACHURCH AND
WHEELER

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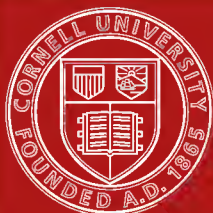
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MODERN PLAYS

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THE COMING OF PEACE

(*A FAMILY CATASTROPHE*)

BY GERHART HAUPTMANN

TRANSLATED BY

JANET ACHURCH

AND

C. E. WHEELER

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PREFACE

A FEW words about the author of "Friedensfest," which is here translated as "The Coming of Peace," will possibly be of interest to readers. Gerhart Hauptmann, who is still a comparatively young man, is as yet little known to English readers, and wholly unknown to English playgoers, except for the performance of this play under the auspices of the Stage Society on the 10th of June 1900, which has given occasion for this translation. In German-speaking countries he is recognised by many as the greatest modern dramatist with the single exception of Henrik Ibsen.

He is certainly the only dramatist who, writing under the inspiration of the great Norwegian poet, can by any remotest possibility be considered to have advanced a step beyond his master in dramatic treatment of the inner social forces of modern life.

It is not my intention here to do more than draw attention to the place *Friedensfest* occupies chronologically among its author's works, and to point out its probable source of inspiration. Those who wish to trace the author's career up to three years ago—he is now only thirty-eight—may be recommended to read "Gerhart Hauptmann, sein Lebensgang und seine Dichtung," written just after the publication of "Die Versunkene Glocke," by Dr Paul Schlenther, the gifted

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critic, now manager of the Vienna Court Theatre. I may, perhaps, be allowed to quote the final sentences of that book to show the high hopes entertained in Germany of Hauptmann's future. "At thirty-five years old," writes Dr Schlenther, "he is a famous man. He stands at life's zenith. Half the Scriptural age lies behind him. The best years of the strength and ripeness of manhood lie close ahead of him. We wait for what shall come."

"Friedensfest" was played in 1890, when Hauptmann was twenty-seven, eight years before these lines were penned. It was preceded by "Vor Sonnenaufgang" in 1889—the first utterance which gave more than local fame to its author—and was succeeded by "Einsame Menschen" in 1891. Of his later works "Die Weber" and "Hannele" have already been translated into English.

In "Friedensfest" and "Einsame Menschen" the influence of Ibsen can be traced more distinctly than in any of Hauptmann's other works. "Friedensfest" recalls in many respects Ibsen's "Ghosts," without any servile copying on the part of the younger author—who has presented his characters with a power and originality, a truth and subtlety peculiarly his own. Moreover he has not been so relentless as Ibsen. Although the "Family Catastrophe," as he calls it, is gloomy enough, in a sense the play ends more hopefully; the doom has not fallen on the younger members of the Scholz family, with whose hereditary qualities the play chiefly deals, and we are permitted to hope, if we choose, that it may never fall. Hauptmann's genius shows itself here of a softer and less uncompromising mould than Ibsen's. We feel that in as far as the play has any tendency, it leans rather

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towards meliorism than pessimism. Like Ibsen's later works, however, it is more objective in treatment than "Ghosts"—more a "family document" pure and simple, than a "tendency" drama.

But it is not my business here to tell the story of the play or to attempt any interpretation. I have merely helped to render it into English.

In translating, we have tried to give the broken, elliptical language in which Hauptmann's characters express themselves, as faithfully as possible—to keep the half-finished sentences and interjunctory outbursts without losing anything of the meaning of the play. Here and there, the rude colloquialism of the speakers, especially of Mrs Scholz and Friebe, have rendered our task almost impossible. We can only plead that we have done our best.

JANET ACHURCH.

THE COMING OF PEACE

PERSONS

DR FRITZ SCHOLZ, aged 68.

MINNA SCHOLZ, *his wife*, aged 46.

AUGUSTA, } aged 29.

ROBERT, } *their children*, aged 28.

WILLIAM, } aged 26.

*So far as possible the above should show
a family likeness.*

MRS BUCHNER, aged 42.

IDA, *her daughter*, aged 20.

FRIEBE, *servant to the Scholzs*, aged 50.

The Play takes place on Christmas Eve 188—, in a lonely country house, near Erkner, in Brandenburg.

SCENE.

A high, roomy, white-washed Hall—hung with old-fashioned pictures—horns and heads of different animals. A chandelier of stag's horns hanging from the middle of the roof-tree is filled with fresh candles. At the back, in the middle of the wall, is a porch, which projects into the hall, with a glass door, through which is seen the heavy carved oaken door of the house. On the top of the porch is a stuffed moorcock: right and left above the level of the porch are windows—frozen and partly dim with snow. To the left is an open arch, built like a gateway—which leads by the staircase to the upper stories. Two low doors in the same wall lead—one to the cellar, the other to the kitchen.

Two other doors in the opposite wall both open into one room; between these stands an old grandfather's clock, on the top of which squats a stuffed screech-owl. The furniture of the room consists of heavy old oak chairs and tables: parallel to the left wall is a table covered with a white cloth. Down the stage to the left is a small iron stove, the flue of which runs along the wall. All the doors are gaily coloured, the panels filled with old-fashioned paintings of parrots, etc.

ACT I

The hall is decorated with green branches. A Christmas tree is lying on the stone flags. Friebe, sitting on the top of the cellar steps, is making a socket for it; Mrs Buchner and Mrs Scholz, standing on either side of the table, are busy fastening gay coloured wax candles into their holders. Mrs Buchner is a healthy looking, well nourished, friendly

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

faced woman, simple, genuine and very neatly dressed : wears her hair smooth : her movements are decided and she is entirely at her ease. Her whole appearance expresses an unusual cordiality which is thoroughly sincere, even if at times her manner suggests affectation. Her way of speaking is fluent and clear, and in moments of excitement declamatory ; an atmosphere of peace and well-being seems to emanate from her. Mrs Scholz, on the contrary, is a woman who looks older than she is, showing signs of premature old age. She is unhealthily fat, with a sallow skin. Her dress is untidy, her hair grey and unkempt ; she wears spectacles. Mrs Scholz is fidgety in her movements, restless, has generally a tearful or whining way of speaking and is evidently in a continual state of excitement. Whilst Mrs Buchner seems only to live for others, Mrs Scholz is completely occupied with herself.

On the table stand two five-branched candlesticks, fitted with candles ; but neither these nor the candles in the chandelier are lighted. There is a lamp burning.

FRIEBE (*striking a blow with his hatchet*).

Not a stroke fails me !

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ffff! ! ! But I can't stand it, Friebe ! How often have I told you. . . . You might easily break the hatchet. The idea ! chopping wood on stone !

FRIEBE.

You leave that to me ! What ! wasn't I ten years in the regiment ?

MRS BUCHNER.

In the regiment ?

MRS SCHOLZ.

He was head man in the royal forests.

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

FRIEBE.

Not—(*he strikes again*) a blessed—(*strikes*) stroke!

[*He stands up, looks at his work by the lamp, and then fastens the Christmas tree so that it stands upright. Friebe is small, already a little bent, bandy-legged, and has a bald head. His small, mobile, little monkey face is unshaven. His hair and stubble beard are yellowish grey. He is a jack-of-all-trades. His coat, stiff with a mixture of plate powder, oil, boot-blackening and dust, was cut for a man twice his size, so that the sleeves are tucked up and the skirts overlap considerably. His brown servant's apron is no cleaner than his coat: from under it from time to time he brings out a snuff-box and takes snuff with intense satisfaction. The tree made firm, he puts it on the table, stands in front and gazes at it.*

FRIEBE.

A real—bonny—well-set-up—little fir tree! (*with condescending superiority to the women*) you don't think so—eh?

MRS BUCHNER.

As an old forester, you should be the best judge of that.

FRIEBE.

Well, certainly, that would be rather too much; as to what a fir tree is—

MRS SCHOLZ (*interrupting him impatiently*).

We really mustn't keep you here, Friebe; my daughter expressly said, "send Friebe for me."

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

FRIEBE.

H'm—tch—for all I care!

[Goes out through the kitchen door, making a contemptuous gesture.]

MRS BUCHNER.

Are you vexed with him?

MRS SCHOLZ.

I should think so. Tiresome idiot! If it hadn't been for my husband—there, you see, that's my husband all over.—This old snuffler—Nothing else would do, he must have *him* about the whole day, or else he wasn't content. Did you ever know such a man?

[Enter Augusta from outside in haste and alarm: once inside, she shuts the glass door violently and throws herself against it as though to prevent some one from coming in.]

MRS SCHOLZ (*most violently startled*).

Oh God-oh-God-oh-God!!!

MRS BUCHNER.

Why?—what—?

[Augusta is tall, lanky, and noticeably thin: she is dressed in the height of fashion but without any taste. Fur jacket, fur cap and muff. The face and the feet are long: the face is sharply cut and bitter featured, with thin lips tightly pressed together. She wears a lorgnette. Her nature unites with her mother's excitability, something of a pathologically disagreeable

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

character. Her personality diffuses round it an atmosphere of discontent, dissatisfaction and comfortlessness.]

AUGUSTA.

Out there!—as true as I'm here—someone—was following me.

MRS BUCHNER (*pointing to the clock*).

William, perhaps.—No! not yet. The train can't be in yet. (*To Augusta*) Wait a moment!

[*She puts out her hand to open the door.*]

AUGUSTA.

No! No!—No! No!

MRS BUCHNER (*in a cooing manner*).

You're nervous, dear child. (*She goes into the porch and opens the outer door, a little timidly*). Is anyone there?— (*Resolutely*) Is anybody there? (*Pause—no answer.*)

MRS SCHOLZ (*irritated*).

Fine doings! As if I hadn't had enough excitement—it's enough to kill one. You're always complaining of *something*.

AUGUSTA (*snappishly*).

Complaining! Complaining!—Haven't I got enough to complain about?

MRS SCHOLZ.

You behave charmingly to your mother, I must say.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

AUGUSTA.

Oh! what do you expect? Who could help being frightened—in pitch darkness—absolutely alone—

MRS BUCHNER (*putting her arms round Augusta's waist from behind—soothingly*).

Madcap! Madcap! to flare up like that for nothing! Come now. (*Helping her to take off her jacket, etc.*) There!—you see?—

AUGUSTA.

Ah! but it is *true*, Mrs Buchner!

MRS BUCHNER.

Now my dear people, listen! Four long days already since we came to stay with you. I've been thinking—sha'n't we drop all these formalities?—Mayn't I call you Augusta? Eh?—Good—then—(*embraces her and kisses Mrs Scholz*).

MRS SCHOLZ (*before she responds to the embrace*).

Wait! wait! My hands are all greasy.

MRS BUCHNER (*to Augusta, who is warming herself at the stove*).

There now! Aren't you better already?—Was the Christmas party nice?

AUGUSTA.

Nothing will take me there again!—Stuffy—no air—hot enough to make you faint!

MRS BUCHNER.

Did the minister speak well?

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

AUGUSTA.

I know one thing; if *I* were poor, I'd have been off after the great man's speech.—I'd have flung all their beggarly trash back in their faces.

MRS BUCHNER.

O—o—h! but it's a great blessing for the poor people.
[*A fresh, clear woman's voice is heard singing.*

“When beneath the linden leaves
The blossom clings,
Memory in my spirit weaves
Dreams of bygone springs.”

[*Ida comes through the stairway. She is twenty years old, and wears a close-clinging black woollen dress. She has a fine, fully matured figure, a very small head, and, on this first entrance, her long yellow hair is loose. She has an air of quiet contentment about her, a subdued cheerfulness and confident expectation of happiness. Although the expression of her clever face is generally bright, it deepens at times into a sudden seriousness, showing that she is unaffectedly lost in her own thoughts.*]

IDA (*a towel laid over her shoulders and some cardboard boxes under her arm*).

Has anybody come?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Augusta has given us a fine fright.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

IDA (*pointing back up the stairs*).

It's not so very comfortable upstairs, either. I hurried (*laughing*) so that I could come down.

MRS SCHOLZ.

But, child! Robert has the room over you now.

IDA (*putting the boxes on the table, opens them and takes out various things*).

Well, if he has, the place is always empty.

MRS BUCHNER.

Your hair should be nearly dry by now, eh?

IDA (*turning her head lovingly, and throwing back her hair*).

Just feel!

MRS BUCHNER (*doing so*).

Oh dear—you should have washed it earlier, child!

IDA.

What a bother the old mane is; I've been scorching myself at the stove for the last half hour (*taking from one of the boxes a yellow silk purse and holding it out to Augusta*). Pretty colour, eh?—It's only just a little joke; has he had many purses?

AUGUSTA (*busy with her jacket, which she is brushing; shrugs her shoulders*).

Don't know (*she looks critically with her short-sighted eyes at the purse*). H'm, h'm, rather loosely knitted (*immediately returning to her jacket*). The plush is done for.

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IDA (*displaying a little box of cigars*).

I—*am* pleased—to think you have never dressed a Christmas tree!

AUGUSTA.

If you come to think of it—it's really not the sort of thing for grown-up people!

MRS SCHOLZ.

No indeed! If ever I'd suggested one, my husband would have never let me hear the end of it. With my dear parents—Ah! when I remember—what a beautiful family life that was. Never a Christmas without a tree! (*Imitating her father's gait and manner*). And then in the evening when father came from the office and brought the beau—u—tiful gingerbread with him (*joining thumb and fore-finger as if she held a piece of the famous cake between them—she puts them to her mouth*). Ah yes—those days are gone. My husband—he wouldn't even eat his dinner with us—he lived upstairs—we down—a perfect hermit. If one wanted anything from him—good Lord—the only way was to get hold of Friebe.

AUGUSTA (*feeding the stove*).

Oh don't go on like that everlastingly!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Don't pile up the stove in that senseless fashion!

AUGUSTA.

Can't we even have the room warm then?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS SCHOLZ.

All the heat flies up the chimney to-day.

AUGUSTA (*demurring crossly*).

Is that a reason for letting it go quite out?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Leave me in peace!

AUGUSTA (*throwing the shovel noisily back into the box*).

Have it your own way! [*Exit Augusta in a rage.*]

IDA.

Ah, Gussie! stay with us!—Just wait—I'll soon bring her round. [*Goes out after her.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*with resignation*).

All my children are like that!—ah—what a girl! There's no holding her! First she wants one thing, then another:—all of a sudden—she takes it into her head—she must study. She'll stick upstairs and not say a word for weeks; and the next thing is—she's no use—nobody wants her.—Oh, good Heavens, yes—you're to be envied—a sweet little thing like *your* daughter—

MRS BUCHNER.

Oh, but Gussie too!—

MRS SCHOLZ.

How charmingly she plays the piano, and that delicious voice—How I love to listen to a voice like that!

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER.

Why don't you ever play now?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh that would be a fine thing. The little peace I have would be done for. Augusta is so nervous—just like her father—he'd run away from the piano as if he were hunted.

MRS BUCHNER.

You should hear your William play now; he has improved!—What would Ida be without him! She's learnt all she knows from him.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah yes! so you told me. Oh, he's full of talent, there's no doubt of that! It was a pleasure to teach him.

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes! and he looks back with such affection on the time when his little mother gave him his first lessons.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Does he?—Good Lord, yes! those were pleasant times. Then I used to think—every thing turns out differently—Oh! I'm so agitated!

MRS BUCHNER.

So agitated?—What about?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Why—about his coming—how does he look now—really?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS BUCHNER.

Well—strong—healthy. You'll be proud of your son.

MRS SCHOLZ.

I'm really surprised that the boy's coming. It's gone to my heart many a time. And the notepaper he's cost me—and never once answered his old mother : how have you brought him to it? That's what I can't understand—that I *can't* understand.

MRS BUCHNER.

I?—Oh! no! it was Ida who persuaded him.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Robert doesn't trouble himself much about us either, but at least he comes once a year at Christmas time for a few days : that's not much to be grateful for—but William—six whole years he's not been here—neither he nor my husband—for six whole years. Does she get on with him?

MRS BUCHNER.

Ida?—Very well in every way.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, that's extraordinary. You simply can't imagine *how* reserved the boy always was—just like his father. No playfellows, no school friends,—nothing.

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes, yes, that's how he was with us at first. He never would come near the house, except for the music-lesson.

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MRS SCHOLZ.

Later, though, he came ?

MRS BUCHNER.

Well,—yes. He said we mustn't worry him, and when he felt able he'd come of his own accord. We had the sense to let him have his own way, and sure enough, after waiting for him half a year, in fact,—when we'd given up waiting, he came—and afterwards, day after day, little by little, he became quite different.

MRS SCHOLZ.

You must have bewitched him—his engagement alone—that's what I can't get over.

MRS BUCHNER.

You must know how to manage with artists. I've learnt that—my dear husband was one.

MRS SCHOLZ.

And that—business—with his father ? Has he confided that to you, too ?

MRS BUCHNER.

N-n-o, dear friend. You see that's the one, only, point—the one thing he can't yet bring himself to—but you may believe me, the remembrance is terribly painful to him—is still—to this very day. And certainly not less so because he *has* kept it to himself. At all costs he must get over that, even in this matter too.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh, God forbid!—no, no—right is right! “Honour thy father and thy mother.” A hand that you raise against your own father—that’s an inhuman hand! We’ve had our quarrels—oh yes! we’ve both our faults, my husband and I, but that’s *our* business, no human being has a right to interfere, least of all one’s own son. And who had to suffer for it? I, of course. An old woman like me has broad shoulders; my husband left the house the very same day, and half an hour later, William too. There was no good talking; first I thought they would come back, but whoever else did they didn’t! And William alone is to blame for it, no one else—no one.

MRS BUCHNER.

William may have been *much* to blame—I’m convinced of that. But think, to have repented for years, and—

MRS SCHOLZ.

No—no! Good heavens, what can you be thinking of! It’s not so easily got over; that would be worse still. It’s very good of you to have taken so to the boy, and it’s nice too that he’s coming—as indeed why shouldn’t he? But, after all, what’s the good of it? It’s not so easy to fill up a gulf—yes, yes, there *are* gulfs—that’s what they are, gulfs—deep gulfs—in our family.

MRS BUCHNER.

Still I can’t help thinking that we—that those of us with firm, honest intentions—

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Intentions, intentions! don't talk to me! I know better! One can intend, and intend, and intend, hundreds of things, and nothing gets any further. No, no!—it's quite another thing with your daughter. She is so—and William is so—and both are what they are.—Much too good a sort for one of us—much, much too good.—Oh, Lord, yes!—intentions!—Ah yes! all these good intentions—Your intentions are all very well, but whether they lead to anything—I doubt it!

MRS BUCHNER.

But I hope it—all the more.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, it may be. I'll say nothing to spoil it. In spite of everything, my heart goes out to the boy; only it excites me so, I'm frightened; and, mind you, it won't be all as easy as you think.

IDA (*enters right; to Mrs Scholz, sweetly*).

Little mother-in-law, she's gilding the nuts.

MRS BUCHNER.

Time's getting on, Ida! You must make yourself beautiful, he may be here at any moment. .

IDA (*startled*).

What? Already!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh, don't trouble! She's much too beautiful for him as it is.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS BUCHNER.

I've put the blue out for you (*calling after Ida*), and put on the brooch; don't forget. [*Exit Ida.*]

MRS BUCHNER (*continuing, to Mrs Scholz*).

She doesn't care a bit for jewellery.

[*The outer door of the house opens and shuts.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

Wait—who—(*to Mrs Buchner*) please will you—I can't see him yet—I—

MRS BUCHNER (*calling up the stairs*).

Ida! your William is here.

[*Dr Scholz enters through the glass door. He is unusually tall, broad-shouldered, very bloated. The face is fat, complexion muddy, the eyes sometimes glittering, with wandering glances, but usually dull and lack-lustre. He has a grey, stubbly beard, partially covering his cheeks; his movements are clumsy and tremulous; he speaks brokenly, as if with his mouth full; stumbles over syllables, and is interrupted by gasping inspirations. He is slovenly dressed: a velvet vest, coat and trousers of nondescript colour, once brown—cap with a large peak, stone-grey in colour, peculiar in shape; red silk neckerchief, linen creased. He uses a large Turkish pocket handkerchief. On entering he carries a malacca cane with a staghorn crook in his right hand, and has flung about him a large military cloak, over his left arm a fur foot-bag.*]

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DR SCHOLZ.

Servus ! servus !

MRS SCHOLZ (*staring at him as if at an apparition*).

Fritz!—

DR SCHOLZ.

As you see.

MRS SCHOLZ (*throwing her arms about him with a scream*).

Fritz!!

AUGUSTA (*opens the door L., starts back*).

Father!

[*Mrs Buchner goes off backwards through the left door, her eyes fixed on Dr Scholz.*]

DR SCHOLZ.

Yes, yes, yes, it's I. But first of all—is Friebe there?

FRIEBE (*peeping through kitchen door, starts—coming forward*).

The doctor! (*He rushes to him and seizes and kisses both his hands*). Now, would anyone have believed it!

DR SCHOLZ.

St!—Just go and see—see that the house door is shut.

[*Friebe nods and obeys with joyful alacrity.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

But Fritz, tell me—only tell me, my mind's all confused (*weeping, embraces him*). Ah Fritz! what grief you've caused me all this long, long time.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

DR SCHOLZ (*putting his wife gently from him*).

Ah well, my life too—we'd better not begin with reproaches. You're just the same doleful old thing (*with gentle bitterness*). Anyhow I should certainly not have troubled you—if it hadn't been for—(*Friebe takes his cloak, etc.*) There are times in life, dear Minna—if one has powerful enemies as I have—

[*Friebe goes out through the stairway with the Dr's belongings.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*pretending to be cross*).

Nobody *made* you come, Fritz. Here there has always been a safe, cosy home;—you could have lived so comfortably here.

DR SCHOLZ.

Don't be cross—you don't understand.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah yes! I'm only a simpleton, I suppose,—but really, you weren't answerable to anyone; it wasn't at all necessary for you—

DR SCHOLZ.

[—St! It was very necessary (*half mysteriously*). After guilt, atonement; after sin, chastisement.]

MRS SCHOLZ.

Yes, yes, Fritz,—it is true—you too had much to answer for. (*From here to the end of the conversation, she continually looks with anxiety towards the front door, as though she feared every moment to see*

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

William come in). We might have been so peaceful, so contented, if you had only let us.

DR SCHOLZ.

It was all my fault, all of it.

MRS SCHOLZ.

There, now you are unjust again.

DR SCHOLZ.

Well, I won't argue with you; many have banded together against me, that's certain—for instance, in the hotels, the waiters—not one night could I sleep in peace—up and down, up and down, in the corridors—and always just in front of *my* door.

MRS SCHOLZ.

But come now, they wouldn't have disturbed you on purpose!

DR SCHOLZ.

No—? oh you!—you don't understand!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, well, it may be, waiters are sometimes very mean.

DR SCHOLZ.

Mean!—I should think they are.—However, we can speak of that later. I have rather a headache—(*puts his hand on the back of his head*). There! that's another disgraceful thing! I know well enough whom I have to thank for that! I'll just see whether I can't drive it away with a sound sleep—I am very tired.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS SCHOLZ.

But there's no fire upstairs, Fritz!

DR SCHOLZ.

Think of that. From Vienna without stopping and no fire!
—Never mind; Friebe will have seen to that. Tell
me about Friebe—I mean—is he still as trustworthy?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Friebe is—what he always was.

DR SCHOLZ.

I was sure of it—well for the present—(*after he has
pressed his wife's hand, he turns with a deep thought-
ful expression and goes towards the staircase. Notic-
ing the Christmas tree, he stops and looks at it
forlornly*). What is that?

MRS SCHOLZ (*disturbed, shamefaced, and a little
frightened*).

We're keeping Christmas.

DR SCHOLZ.

Keeping Christmas!—(*after a long pause, lost in memories*)
It's a long—long—time (*turning and speaking with
real emotion*). And you—you've grown quite white!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Yes, Fritz—both of us!

[*Dr Scholz nodding turns away and goes off through
stairway L.*

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER (*entering quickly from R.*).

So your husband has come back?

MRS SCHOLZ.

It's as though—as if—I don't know—Christ! what am I to think!

MRS BUCHNER.

That it is a gift, dear friend, for which we must all be thankful.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah! what he looks like! How he has lived! What an existence!—from one country to another, from one town to—ah! he's gone through something!

[*Mrs Buchner is going to stairway.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

What are you going to do?

MRS BUCHNER.

Tell Ida of the joyful event.

[*Goes off through stairway.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh yes!—no, no,—what are you thinking of! We mustn't let that out. If my husband finds out that anyone but himself lives up there, I should get into nice trouble.

MRS BUCHNER (*from the stairs*).

I'll go very gently.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Yes, quite gently.—That would be dreadful!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS BUCHNER.

I'm going quite gently.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh God-oh-God-oh-God!—Well—very, very gently!

AUGUSTA (*hastily entering from R.*).

Father is here?

MRS SCHOLZ (*beside herself*).

Why, of course! And now what's to be done! The next thing will be William—Oh! the deadly fear I've been in! If he and his father were to meet! Any minute he may come in! What an experience to go through for an old woman like me!

AUGUSTA.

What an extraordinary sensation, mamma, extraordinary! —We were so used to— It's like a man risen from the dead after long years.—I'm frightened, mamma.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Do you suppose he's come to the end of his money?

AUGUSTA.

Now—that would be—Well! I—that would be the last straw!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, in that case, how should we manage at all! We might as well go and beg at once.

[*Ida fully dressed enters from stairway, presses Augusta's hand joyfully.*]

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA.

Gussie! (*winningly*) It's really true! Oh! I am so glad.

[*Mrs Scholz and Augusta show a certain painful emotion.*

[*Robert enters from one of the doors R.; he is of middle height, slender, pale-faced, and haggard-looking. His eyes are sunken, and at times glitter feverishly; moustache and imperial. He smokes Turkish tobacco out of a noticeably short-stemmed pipe.*

ROBERT (*lightly*).

You're going to have it warm here, mother.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Now *he's* beginning!

AUGUSTA.

For all I care!

[*Steals sidelong glances at Ida's dress.*

ROBERT (*to Ida, who has looked at him reproachfully*).

Yes, that's how I'm made, Miss Ida!

IDA (*shaking her head at him incredulously*).

No! no!

AUGUSTA (*exploding*).

You're too maddening, Robert!

ROBERT.

Not intentionally! Don't *get* mad!

[*Augusta makes a contemptuous gesture.*

ROBERT.

And then——?

AUGUSTA.

And then!—And then!—Bosh!

ROBERT (*with simulated astonishment*).

I beg your pardon—I thought—but you no longer depend on mere outward charms!

IDA (*soothingly*).

Oh! Mr Robert!

ROBERT.

H'm, mustn't I defend myself?

AUGUSTA (*half choked with tears*).

Just like you! Just like you. Your whole—my age—it's infamous of you! Mrs Buchner! isn't it too mean of him? To me! I—I who have stuck to mother—through the best—most beautiful time of my young life!—whilst all of you—I—just as if I'd been a servant-girl!

ROBERT.

On my word!—that has the true ring—try the stage! (*with an altered manner: roughly*) Don't play the fool; just think! you with a martyr's halo, that would be too funny! You'd have come off even worse anywhere else than you have at home, that's the truth of it!

AUGUSTA.

Mother! you can bear witness—haven't I refused three proposals?

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

ROBERT.

Pff! If mother had only forked out the necessary money the gentlemen would no doubt have included you in the bargain.

MRS SCHOLZ (*stepping up to Robert, holding her hand out*).

There, take a knife—cut it out of me—cut the money out of my hand!

AUGUSTA.

Listen to me! Would you like to see the letters of refusal?

MRS SCHOLZ (*interrupting*).

Children! (*She makes a movement as if to bare her breast for a death-stroke.*) Here—rather kill me at once! Haven't you so much pity for me? Not so much? What? Ah! good Lord! Not five minutes! I never saw such children; not five minutes can you keep peace!

ROBERT.

Exactly, that's what I said: things are warming up again.

[*Friebe comes importantly from the stairway; he whispers to Mrs Scholz, whereupon she gives him a key. Friebe goes out through cellar door. Robert has stood watching this proceeding.*

ROBERT (*as Friebe disappears down the cellar steps*).

Aha!

AUGUSTA (*who has kept her eye on Robert: breaking out furiously*).

You haven't a shred of filial feeling!—not one shred!

ROBERT.

And then——?

AUGUSTA.

But you're a good hand at acting—you lie abominably ;
and that's the most disgusting part of it.

ROBERT.

About father, do you mean ?

AUGUSTA.

Especially about father.

ROBERT (*shrugging his shoulders*).

If you mean——

AUGUSTA.

Yes—yes—that—*that!* Yes—for—if it were *not* so, then,
yes *then* you would be a scoundrel——

MRS SCHOLZ (*interrupting*).

Will you two be quiet or ——

ROBERT (*without noticing her*).

Then I am a scoundrel—well and then?——

[*Ida, who for a long time has shown restless expectation goes out through glass door.*]

AUGUSTA.

Pfui! shameless!

ROBERT.

Shameless—just so. So I am.

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER.

Mr Robert! I don't believe you—you are better than you would have us believe—better than you yourself believe!

ROBERT (*with slight but increasing sarcasm, coldly*).

My dear Mrs Buchner! it is no doubt very kind of you—but as I said—I hardly know—to what this honour—indeed I can lay no claim to your indulgence. My self-esteem is at the present moment by no means so slight that I feel the need of anyone to——

MRS BUCHNER (*slightly bewildered*).

That isn't at all what I mean—only—your *father*?

ROBERT.

My father for me is a certain Fritz Scholz, doctor of medicine.

AUGUSTA.

Oh yes—go on!

ROBERT.

And if I cannot feel towards this man quite so indifferent as towards any other tomfool, it is because I—and then—(*he smokes*) because I—well just this—I am myself to a certain extent the product of his folly.

MRS BUCHNER (*hardly believing her ears*).

Excuse me! I can't follow you so far. How can you say such a thing?—It really quite upsets me.

MRS SCHOLZ (*to Mrs Buchner*).

There, there!—You'll see things in this house——

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

AUGUSTA.

Now what do you mean by that, mother? We are—*what* we are. Other people who do—Lord knows what—they're no better!

ROBERT.

As a matter of fact there are always simple souls to be found who are never happy unless they can potter about tinkering their neighbours' affairs—exploded ideas!—Rubbish!

MRS BUCHNER (*seizing Robert by both hands, with feeling*).

Mr Robert! I feel under a distinct obligation to you. I'm quite charmed. Honestly, you haven't offended me in the least!

ROBERT (*a little taken aback*).

You are an extraordinary woman!

[*Friebe comes from the cellar; he carries in his left hand three bottles of red wine, the bottle necks between his fingers, a bottle of cognac under his left arm. In his right hand he has the cellar key. Advancing to Mrs Scholz, importantly.*]—

FRIEBE.

Now then—the cigars.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Good gracious, Friebe, I really don't know—

ROBERT.

In the writing-table, mother.

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah—yes!— [*She takes a bunch of keys and fumbles nervously for the right one.*]

AUGUSTA.

Why! you know the key of the desk!

ROBERT.

The one with the straight ward.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh yes! wait a minute!

ROBERT.

Give it to me.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Wait—wait—here—ah!—no!—I'm quite confused! (*handing Robert the bunch*). There!

ROBERT (*detaching the right key and passing it to Friebe*).

There, I trust my father's cigars may meet with your approval.

FRIEBE.

There you are! We shan't get him away from them all day! (*bell rings loudly*) Coming—coming! (*goes off upstairs*).

MRS SCHOLZ.

Now the wine will soon come to an end!—Good heavens! What are we coming to! All that wine. Always those strong, expensive cigars! I tell you he will ruin himself!

ROBERT.

Well, it's a free country!

MRS BUCHNER.

What do you mean?

ROBERT.

Everyone has a right to amuse himself in his own way.

I, at any rate, would not have my right interfered with, not even by law. H'm, it's extraordinary!

MRS BUCHNER.

What!

ROBERT.

Extraordinary!

MRS BUCHNER.

Why do you look at me so critically? Is it something about me that is *extraordinary*?

ROBERT.

Depends how you look at it! You've been with us several days, and you've not yet thought of going—!

AUGUSTA.

What a way to talk!

MRS SCHOLZ.

They *won't* stop! [*She shakes her head despairingly.*]

ROBERT (*with brutal candour*).

Well mother, isn't it true? Have any strangers ever been able to stand us more than half a day? Haven't they all cleared out?—The Schulzes—the Lehmanns?

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

AUGUSTA.

As if we were dependent on strangers—for my part we're enough for ourselves.

ROBERT.

Oh *more than enough!* (*Brutally*) I tell you, Mrs Buchner, they would fly at each other's throats before perfect strangers—like wild beasts. Mother would tear off the tablecloth, father smash the water-bottle—cheerful, eh?—Pretty scenes!—Charming impressions for children!

AUGUSTA.

You ought to crawl out of sight for shame, you mean wretch, you! [*Goes off quickly.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

You see? *This* is what I've endured for years—*years!* [*Goes out in great agitation.*]

ROBERT (*going on, quite unmoved*).

And no wonder. A man of forty marries a girl of sixteen and carries her off to this godforsaken corner. A man who has served as surgeon in the Turkish army, and travelled through Japan. A cultivated, enterprising spirit, who works out the most daring projects—joins himself to a woman who a few years before was firmly convinced, that America was one of the stars in the sky. Truly I don't exaggerate! Well, the result—a stagnant, corrupt, fermenting swamp—out of which we have had the doubtful advantage of growing—Horrible!—Love?—not a trace. Mutual understanding?—respect?—not a touch

↓ Background

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

—and this is the soil from which we children have grown.

MRS BUCHNER.

Mr Robert!—I want to beg you—

ROBERT.

All right! I don't want to talk of it. Besides the story is—

MRS BUCHNER.

No, no!—I want to ask you for something—pressing.

ROBERT.

Ask me—what?

MRS BUCHNER.

Couldn't you—to please me—couldn't you?—wouldn't it be possible—just this one evening—couldn't you put off your mask?

ROBERT.

That's good! Put off my mask?

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes, for it's not really you—it's not really your own face that you show us.

ROBERT.

What an idea!

MRS BUCHNER.

Promise me—Mr Robert!—

ROBERT.

But I really don't know—

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER.

William—your brother William may come at any moment
—and—

ROBERT (*interrupting*).

Mrs Buchner, if you would only—Believe me!—your efforts, I assure you, are quite useless—all this will lead to nothing—absolutely nothing—it's all been spoilt for us—ruined—bungled from the very beginning—bungled through every year of our lives. There's nothing more to be done. It all looks very—promising—Christmas tree—candles—presents—family gathering—That's only on top: a downright damnable lie—nothing else! And now—Father!—If I didn't know how unmanageable he is—on my honour I should believe—that it was you—who brought him here—

MRS BUCHNER.

Indeed no! That is just what has quickened my hopes. It is not chance, it's providence—and so from my heart I beg you to be kind and brotherly to William. If you only knew how highly he speaks of you, with what love and what respect—

ROBERT (*interrupting*).

H'm!—and what use will it be?

MRS BUCHNER.

What?

ROBERT.

Why should I be kind and brotherly to him?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

MRS BUCHNER.

You ask that!

ROBERT.

Yes.

MRS BUCHNER.

Well—at least not to spoil his return home for him.

ROBERT.

Oh, we don't affect each other as you seem to think, and, besides, if you imagine he is going to be overcome by a subtle emotion on first entering here—

MRS BUCHNER.

Your brother is so good—a really fine character!—He must have fought a great fight before bringing himself to this point. He is coming with an intense desire for reconciliation, that I can *assure* you!

ROBERT.

I can't understand all that. Reconciled—to what?—That's what I can't see. As a rule, we understand one another fairly well in this family. But this is quite beyond me! I've nothing to say against him, but on the other hand there's no disguising facts.—I ask you—do you imagine that I have any exaggerated respect for my father?—Of course not.—Or that I have any—love—for him?—Or any childlike feeling of gratitude?—You see, I haven't the slightest reason for any such feeling. In all our lives, the most that we have ever been to each other, has been a source of amusement. At moments, when we have blamed each other for our common unhappiness, we have

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

actually hated each other. Well, between father and William this same hatred grew. That I understand well enough. That I haven't done what William did is perhaps an accident. So I have nothing against him—*nota bene*, so long as I don't see him. But if I see him, then all my logic goes to the devil, for I am rather,—rather—h'm, what shall I say?—Well, *then* I only see the man who has struck my father, not his, but *my* father, struck him in the face!

MRS BUCHNER.

Oh my God!—

ROBERT.

And then I can answer for nothing—you see?—absolutely for nothing.

MRS BUCHNER.

My God!—Was that it!—Struck him, you say?—In—the—f—, in the face? His own father?—

ROBERT.

Just that.

MRS BUCHNER (*half beside herself*).

Oh my God!—But then—then I can indeed!—Ah! then I must speak to him at once.—Your good old father—for —

ROBERT (*quite startled*).

To whom?—

MRS BUCHNER (*bursting into tears*).

To your poor dear old ill-treated father!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

ROBERT (*trying to restrain her*).

For heaven's sake what can you—

MRS BUCHNER.

Let me go—I must—I must—! [*Goes through stairway.*]

ROBERT (*calling after her*).

Mrs Buchner! (*Turning back*) Damned hysteria!—

[*He shrugs his shoulders, and paces the room more than once; he makes a movement as if to hurry after her, but finally gives up the idea, and forces himself into a state of apparent indifference; he first occupies himself with his pipe; knocks it out, fills it with new tobacco from his pouch, lights it, and seems for some minutes lost in the enjoyment of smoking. Presently his interest is roused by the Christmas tree, and turning to the presents on the table, he plants himself before them; while surveying them, pipe in mouth, he laughs bitterly more than once. Suddenly he starts, takes his pipe in his hand, and bends low over the table: straightening himself, he seems for the first time to discover that he is alone; looking round as cautiously as a thief, he bends forward again, hastily seizes the yellow silk purse, looks at it more closely, and presses it with a sudden passionate movement to his lips. In this movement he shows, as by a lightning flash, an eerie, (feverish passion.) A noise startles him. Instantly the purse lies where it was. On tiptoe he tries to slip away. Just as he is disappearing through the door down R., he sees*

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

his mother enter by the adjoining door, and on his part stands still. Mrs Scholz goes heavily but quickly across the room to the stairway, where she stands and listens.]

ROBERT (*turning back*).

I say, mother, what does that woman want?

MRS SCHOLZ (*frightened*).

Oh God-oh-God-oh-God-oh-God!!! How you startle one!

ROBERT.

What! (*puffs*) wh— (*puffs again*), what does Mrs—Mrs Buchner really want here, I should like to know?

MRS SCHOLZ.

What *I* want to know is, what your father—what *he* really wants? Ah, just tell me! what is it?

ROBERT.

Well, you'll scarcely refuse him a roof over his head?

MRS SCHOLZ (*perversely, almost in tears*).

I really don't see. It's so long since he wanted me; one was at any rate one's own master; now it will begin all over again. The old worry!—now in one's old days, one will be ordered about like a little child!

ROBERT.

Oh! how you exaggerate! It's always the same, you will exaggerate so.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Just you wait till he sees the empty greenhouse to-morrow. There's waste enough without my keeping another gardener; the bee-hives, they're gone too. No flowers need trouble themselves to grow for anything I care, they only give you headaches; and then the insects—I don't know what he gets out of it; and for that, one must be ordered about like a good-for-nothing! The first "hallo!" startles me out of my wits. Oh, this world is no longer any good.

ROBERT (*while Mrs Scholz speaks, shrugs his shoulders and turns to go, then stops and answers*).

Was it ever better, then?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Better! I should think so!!

ROBERT.

Really! that must have been before my time!

[*Goes out through lower door.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*listening again on stairway*).

When I remember—they're talking upstairs (*she looks up, sees she is alone, listens again uneasily, and finally goes out through stairway, one hand up to her ear, her face expressing fright and curiosity*).

[*Ida and William enter through the glass door: William is of middle height, strong, healthy-looking; fair hair, cut short; his clothes fit well without being foppish; overcoat, hat, satchel. His left arm is laid round Ida's shoulders. She*

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

has her right arm thrown around him, and with gentle force is pushing him on.]

IDA.

You see now, you're inside! The worst is over already.

WILLIAM.

Ah no!

[Sighs heavily.]

IDA.

You may believe me how very glad your mother is—and Gussie too. *(She pulls off his winter gloves)* Where did you get these from!

WILLIAM.

So you know my—mother now?

IDA.

All of them, dearest; we're sworn friends already.

WILLIAM.

And how do you—like them?

IDA.

Dear people, as you know very well.

WILLIAM *(growing each moment more constrained and depressed, speaks as though to himself)*.

Extraordinary! *(his eyes catch sight of the Christmas tree, he immediately lowers them; starting involuntarily)*.

IDA.

But, dearest, surely that's not the first Christmas tree which you—

WILLIAM.

Yes, *here*, and you cannot possibly feel with me how—
how—extraordinary——

IDA (*taking off his coat ; he remains passive*).

Please, please, Willy (*standing in front of him, his coat over her arm, his hat and satchel in her hand*), Willy, look at me! (*encouragingly*) straight— (*stands a moment drawn up to her full height, then puts the things quickly to one side, and comes back to William*). You have promised me!

WILLIAM.

Have you ever,—Ida,—have you ever seen a vaulted tomb hung with wreaths and—

IDA (*shocked*).

Oh William! (*quite beside herself, throws her arms about him*) that *is* bad of you!—that is too bad! that is really too, *too* bad of you!

WILLIAM (*putting her gently from him with suppressed emotion*).

All that means nothing, nothing at all. (*Coldly repelling her*) Be reasonable, be reasonable!

IDA.

Oh! what *is* the matter with you!

WILLIAM (*looking through the tree*).

Everything else is as it used to be. Ida, you must really, really remember what this all means to me.

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA.

I'm getting so frightened, Willy! Perhaps, after all, it would have been better to——Mother certainly did not know that it would be *so* hard for you,—and I—I only thought—because mother said—it wasn't that *I* wished it—! But now, now that you've got so far, do—will you?—for my sake! Ah! (*putting her arms round him*).

WILLIAM (*drawn a little further into the room by Ida's embrace, with sighs of deep inward disturbance*).

Every step forwards—what I have lived through in this very place!

IDA.

Only don't stir that up! Don't stir all that up!

WILLIAM.

See! now it's getting clear to me—your mother should not have persuaded me to this. She's always so confident,—so—I knew—I told her—but that simple absolute confidence! If only I hadn't allowed myself to be blinded—

IDA.

Ah! how seriously you take everything, William! Believe me, you will speak differently to-morrow,—as soon as you've once seen them all again. Then you'll at any rate have done your part; you will have proved that you were in earnest in your wish to live at peace with your family.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

WILLIAM.

To see it all again! all the old places! Everything comes back—so vividly, you know—the past comes so close to me—so oppressively close—one can—one is quite helpless—

IDA (*embracing him with tears*).

When I see you like this, William—ah, don't think—for pity's sake don't think I would have urged you. I am so frightfully sorry for you!

WILLIAM.

Ida, I can tell *you*!—I assure you—I must get away from here! That's evident.—I'm not equal to this struggle evidently; it might wreck me altogether! You are such a child, Ida! a sweet, innocent child—how should you know! Thank God indeed that you cannot even dream what I—what this man whom you know—I can tell *you*—Hatred!—Bitterness!—the very moment I came in—

IDA.

Shall we go? shall we go away? this minute?

WILLIAM.

Yes! For in these surroundings you—even you—I can scarcely separate you in my mind from the rest! I'm losing you! It's criminal in me the mere fact that you should be here!

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA.

If you could only explain, William, there must be—something terrible must have happened here that—

WILLIAM.

Here! A crime—all the more terrible because it did not count as one. Here my life was given to me, and here that same life—I can tell *you*, was—I had almost said systematically destroyed, till it grew loathsome to me—till I dragged it—bowed down like a beast of burden—crept about with it—buried myself, hid myself.—What can I say—one suffers beyond words!—Fury—hate—revenge—despair without ceasing, day and night; the same gnawing devouring pain (*pointing to his forehead*) here (*pointing to his heart*) and there!

IDA.

Only—what can I do, William? I dare not trust myself to advise you in any way, I am so—

WILLIAM.

You should have been contented to leave me with at least the happiness that I had gained. It had all grown so mercifully dim, I realise now *how dim!* (*overcome with excitement, he sinks on to a chair*).

IDA (*with a suppressed cry*).

William!

MRS BUCHNER (*rushing in through the stairway to William*).

William! listen to me! Only remember now what has been said between us. Now that I am so much

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT I.

to you—I implore you—now show your—yes, I demand it—I demand it from you, as the mother of my child! William, it rests with *you* now—with you only, William! you have been terribly, terribly to blame; you have a terrible debt to pay—you shall be happy again; I have done it, I have spoken to your father—he—

WILLIAM (*springs up, straight and stiff, with fixed eyes, stammering*):—

F—F—father!—what—t—to my f—father (*he staggers and stumbles like one out of his mind, and catches at his overcoat*) I—

IDA (*frightened*).

Willy! Willy!

WILLIAM (*makes signs that he must not be stopped*).

IDA.

Ah, mother! William! you—you shouldn't have told him so suddenly.

MRS BUCHNER.

William! are you a man! you cannot have deceived us. If you have still a spark of love for us—for Ida, I demand it of you. I—a woman—

IDA (*intercepts William, who has seized his outdoor things, flings her arms round and holds him fast*).

You shall not go—or else I—mother, if he goes, I go with him!

WILLIAM.

Why have you concealed this from me?

ACT I. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA.

Never! don't think so badly of us! We have concealed nothing from you! All of us, your mother, your sister, we had not an idea, any more than you had; he only came a few minutes ago,—without letting anyone know beforehand, and so, you see—I thought immediately—

WILLIAM.

Who has told you that?

MRS BUCHNER (*in tears, seizing his hands*).

You were terribly, terribly to blame.

WILLIAM.

So you know?

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes, now.

WILLIAM.

Everything?

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes, everything, and you see I was right: you were still dragging a load, that was the secret.

WILLIAM.

You know that I—?

MRS BUCHNER (*nods affirmatively*).

WILLIAM.

And Ida, is she to be sacrificed to a man like—like me?
Does she know it—do you know it, Ida, too?

IDA.

No, William, but whether I know it or not, that really does not matter.

WILLIAM.

No?—This hand, that you, that you have often,—this hand (*to Mrs Buchner*), it was that?

MRS BUCHNER (*nods as before*).

WILLIAM (*to Ida*).

How shamefully I have deceived you! No, I can't tell you—another time!

MRS BUCHNER.

William, I know what I am asking, but I—you *must* humble yourself before your poor father; till then you will never feel quite free! Call to him, pray to him. Ah! William! you *must*! You must cling to his knees, and if he spurns you with his foot, you must not defend yourself! You must not speak a word! patient as a lamb! Believe me, a woman who wishes the *best* for you!

WILLIAM.

You *don't* know, you cannot know, what you are asking of me! Ah! you may thank God, Mrs Buchner, that he has hidden the extent of your cruelty from you! Infamous it may have been what I did! Sacrilegious!—But what I have gone through, here—fought through, suffered—those fearful tortures—he laid the full burden, all the burden on me, and at the end

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

of all, that accursed sin! But in spite of all (*after a long deep look into Ida's eyes, bracing himself as if to a firm resolution*), perhaps I shall succeed—in spite of all!

ACT II

The room is empty. It is lighted partly by a lamp, with a red shade, placed in the arch of the stairway, but principally from the open doors of the side room. Here the company is seated at table, as is evident from the ringing of glasses and clatter of plates, knives and forks.

[*Ida, followed at once by William, comes out of the side room.*]

IDA.

At last! (*Coaxingly.*) And now, you *must* think of your father, Willy. Don't be angry with me, but since you have a favour to ask your father, you mustn't wait till he comes down to you.

WILLIAM.

Did father think of coming down to dinner?

IDA.

Of course! Mamma has—

[*William seizes Ida suddenly in his arms and presses her to him impulsively with passionate strength.*]

IDA.

Oh—oh—you—If anyone—my hair will be all—

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

[*William lets his arms fall nervelessly from round her, folds his hands, hangs his head, and stands before her suddenly sobered, like an arrested criminal.*]

(*Smoothing her hair.*) Oh, what a rough boy you are, sometimes!

WILLIAM.

Rough you call it—I should call it something quite different.

IDA.

Oh, Willy! why are you so depressed again? All in a minute! Really, you're incorrigible!

WILLIAM (*gripping her hand, puts his arm round her shoulders, makes her walk with him quickly through the hall.*)

Incorrigible? Yes—you see—that's just it; I'm afraid of nothing so much as that I—as that—all your trouble with me will be thrown away, I'm so terribly changeable! (*Touching his forehead.*) There's no peace here. Any second might decide my fate! I'm afraid of myself! To be always running away from one's self. Have you any idea of what that means? Well, that's what I am, what I have been all my life.

IDA.

After all—but no, that won't do—

WILLIAM.

But do say—

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA.

I've often thought—really—it has seemed to me so often that—don't be angry—but that really there is nothing from which you need fly. I myself sometimes think—

WILLIAM.

Ah, my dearest! You mustn't—Did you notice Robert—did you see?

IDA.

No—what?

WILLIAM.

Did you see how he met me? He—you see—he *knows* that I have to fly from myself, he knows me. Just ask him, he will make it clear to you, that is to say, he threatens to—Ah, I know better! Only just watch how he always looks at me. He means me to be anxious, to be frightened—Ha! ha! ha! No, my dear brother, we're not so pitiful as all that yet! And now you *do* see, don't you, Ida, that I daren't let you—I mean, you mustn't have any illusions about me. There is only one way. I must be frank with you—I must manage *that* somehow—I fight for that. When you know me through and through, then — I mean if you can bear with me, if you can still—love me—then—that would be—then I think something might arise in me, something brave, even proud—then I should *really* live, and if they were all to despise me— (*Ida nestles against him devotedly.*) And now, before I go up to father, I'll tell you too—you know what I mean? [*Ida nods.*]

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

WILLIAM.

Now you shall—I must force myself to tell you what this—between me and my father—yes, Ida, I *will* do it— (*They walk arm in arm.*) Just imagine! I was here on a visit.—No, I can't begin like that, I must go farther back. You know before that I had been making my own way for a long time. I suppose I hadn't told you that?

IDA.

No—But quietly, only not so much—Don't excite yourself so, Willy!

WILLIAM.

You see—there again! I am a coward. I've never yet dared to tell you what my life has been. In any case it's a risk—it's a risk—even to one's self. Ah! well, if I can't even bring myself to that point, how shall I ever manage to go up to father?

IDA.

Ah, don't—don't torture yourself so! just now, when you have so much to bear!

WILLIAM.

Ah! you are afraid? You're afraid of what you may hear?

IDA.

Sh! you must not speak like that.

WILLIAM.

Well then, just picture it. Father spent his life up there. He had always lived alone till he met mother, and

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

he soon fell back into the old lonely, fantastic way of life. All of a sudden he descended on us—Robert and me,—he never troubled his head about Augusta. . . . Ten solid hours a day we pored over books; when I look at our prison—even to-day—it was next his study—you must have seen it?

IDA.

The great room upstairs?

WILLIAM.

Background

Yes, that one. Once we had entered that room, the sun might shine as brightly as it liked through the windows, it was night for us inside. Well, then, you see, we used to take refuge with mother; we simply ran away from him; and then there used to be scenes—mother pulling me by one arm, father by the other. It came to this, that Friebe had to carry us upstairs. We defended ourselves: we used to bite his hands. Of course, nothing was any use; our life only became more unendurable—but we remained obstinate and—I know now—father began to hate us. We drove him to such a point that one day he hunted us downstairs; he couldn't endure us any more, the very sight of us was hateful to him.

IDA.

But your father—you'll admit he meant well—he wanted you to learn a great deal, and so—

WILLIAM.

Up to a certain point he may have meant well—may have—but at that time we were only boys of nine or ten

and afterwards the good intentions disappeared. On the contrary, his intention then was to let us go utterly to ruin. Yes, yes, mother was a cipher. For five years we were left to ourselves in the most reckless way: we were scamps and loafers. I had one thing left—my music; Robert had nothing. But we took to other things besides. We shall scarcely ever get over the effects of some of *them*.—At last I suppose father's conscience pricked him; there were frightful scenes with mother. In the end we were packed off to an Institution, and when I could not stand the slavery of that any more and ran away, he had me stopped and sent to Hamburg. The good-for-nothing should go to America. The good-for-nothing naturally ran away again. I let my parents alone and starved and fought my own way through the world. Robert has much the same experience to look back upon. Nevertheless, in father's eyes we have remained good-for-nothings: later on I was simple enough to ask him for some help—as a right, not as charity; I wanted to go to the Conservatoire. Then he wrote to me, on a postcard, "Be a cobbler." And so you see, Ida, we are in a way self-made men, but we're not particularly proud of it.

IDA (*smiling*).

Really, Willy, I can't help it! I do sympathise with you so, but at this moment I can't help—Oh, don't look so strangely at me, please—please—

WILLIAM.

Ah, Ida, it's bitter, not a thing to laugh at.

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA (*breaking out*).

It's a feeling of *joy*, William! I must tell you! It may be selfish, but I am so inexpressibly glad that you—that you can be so much in need of—Ah, I will be so good to you, Willy. I see clearly what I have to do. Ah! I am quite confused! I pity you so, but the more I pity you, the more glad I am. Do you understand? I mean, I am thinking how I may perhaps—everything—all the love that you have had to go without—I may perhaps more than—

WILLIAM.

If I'm only worth it—for now something is coming for which I alone am to blame—Years ago—no! it's—I used to come afterwards on a sort of visit to mother. Picture to yourself, Ida, when I saw all that misery again, just imagine how I used to feel.

IDA.

Your mother—suffered very much?

WILLIAM.

I think differently now in many ways about mother. In any case, father was most to blame. In those days it used to seem to me as if he kept mother here against her will. I even wanted her to separate from him.

IDA.

But, your mother surely couldn't—

WILLIAM.

She didn't see it as I did. She hadn't the courage. Well, what father used to look like in my eyes, you can perhaps imagine.

IDA.

But William! Perhaps you too, were not quite just to your father—a man—

WILLIAM (*without noticing Ida's interruption.*)

Once I committed the folly of bringing a friend—nonsense! not a friend, a chance acquaintance, a musical fellow. I brought him here with me. That was quite refreshing for mother; she played duets with him every day for a whole week, and then—frightful!—as true as I'm here he—not the shadow of a possibility! Yet at the end of the week even the servants flung it in her face!

IDA.

Forgive me! I don't—I—flung what?

WILLIAM.

Mother—mother was supposed to—my mother—supposed to—just think, they actually dared to accuse her of it openly, she—a secret understanding with—that she—I taxed her with it—the girl who said it—insolent—the coachman had told her. I went to the coachman, and he—he stuck to it—had it from the master, from the master himself—, naturally I—was it possible I could believe such a thing! At least I tried not to—until I myself overheard—in the stables—father and the stable boy—you may believe my very hands tingled when I heard him—about my mother.

IDA.

Only do be—try—don't excite yourself so *fearfully*. You are quite—

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

I don't know any more—I only know there is something in a man—his will is a mere wisp of straw. One must go through it to—It swept over me like a flood. A state like—and in this state I found myself suddenly in father's room. I saw him. He was doing something—I can't remember what. And then I—literally—I thrashed him—with these hands.

[He can scarcely hold himself up.

[Ida dries the tears from her eyes. Pale and trembling she stands some moments looking at William, then, crying quietly, kisses him on the forehead.

WILLIAM.

You angel of pity! (*The Doctor's voice is heard on the stair.*) And now—if ever—

[He braces himself, Ida kisses him again. He has gripped her hand. As the voice of the Doctor ceases, merry laughter is heard from room B.

WILLIAM (*alluding to the laughter, as well as to the Doctor's step, heard descending the stairs*).

You have a wonderful power.

[Another hand grip between them, and before Ida goes out she turns round.

IDA (*again seizing William's hand at door*).

Be brave.

[Exit.

DR SCHOLZ (*still on the stairs*).

Eh! Nonsense! To the right, Friebe. Eh! My elbow! leave go, leave go! Confound you.

[*During the Doctor's approach William shows more and more excitement. His colour changes quickly, he thrusts his hands through his hair, breathes deeply, makes movements with his right hand as though playing the piano. It is quite evident that he is torn by different emotions, that his resolution is shaken. He seems about to rush away, but is stopped by the Doctor's entrance. He has caught hold of the back of a chair to support himself and stands there white and trembling. The Doctor, drawn up to his full imposing height, measures his son with a look in which terror, hate and contempt are expressed. There is a silence. Friebe, who has entered with the Doctor, whom he has led and lighted down the stairs, makes use of the pause to slink away into the kitchen. William shows marked signs of his mental conflict. He tries to speak, his voice fails him, only his lips move noiselessly. He takes his hand from the chair back and steps up to the old man. He stumbles, staggers, and almost falls; stops and tries to speak again, and cannot; drags himself nearer, and clasping his hands, sinks at the old man's feet. In Doctor Scholz's face the expression has changed from hate to astonishment, growing sympathy and confusion.*]

DR SCHOLZ.

My boy—my dear boy! My—(*he tries to raise him by his hands.*) Only get up! (*He takes William's head, which has sunk between both hands, and turns it*

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

towards him.) My boy—only look at me! Ah!
what is the matter? [*William moves his lips.*]

DR SCHOLZ (*with trembling voice*).

What—what are you saying to me?

WILLIAM.

Father—I—

DR SCHOLZ.

What?—Do you mean?

WILLIAM.

I have—I h—ha—have—

DR SCHOLZ.

Nonsense, nonsense. No more of such—

WILLIAM.

I have sinned against you—

DR SCHOLZ.

Nonsense, nonsense. I don't know what you are talking
about! Bygones are bygones! For my sake—my
boy!

WILLIAM.

Only take it from me! Take this burden from me!

DR SCHOLZ.

Forgiven and forgotten, boy! Forgiven and forgotten!

WILLIAM.

Thank—

[*He draws a deep breath and loses consciousness.*]

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

DR SCHOLZ.

My boy! What are you doing—what—

[He lifts William, quite unconscious, drags and puts him in a large armchair near R. table. Whilst he does so, Ida, Robert, Augusta, Mrs Scholz and Mrs Buchner come hastily out of dining-room, Friebe out of the kitchen.]

Some wine—quick, some wine.

[Ida in a moment goes and returns with wine.]

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh God-oh-God-oh-God!!! water! sprinkle him with water!

[Dr Scholz puts wine to his mouth.]

AUGUSTA.

What was it?

IDA *(pale and in tears, laying one cheek against William's arm)*.

How icy cold he is.

MRS SCHOLZ.

But what has the boy got into such a state of excitement for? that's what I should like to know. That is completely—

ROBERT *(seizes her hand and stops her)*.

Mother!

MRS BUCHNER.

Sprinkle more water, more water, Doctor!

DR SCHOLZ.

Tch! Tch! have none of you any Eau-de-Cologne?

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes (*giving him small bottle*). Please—

DR SCHOLZ.

Thanks.

[*He wets the fainting man's brow.*]

IDA (*to Doctor*).

It is only—isn't it? but (*she bursts into tears*) he looks so—just as if he were—he looks like death.

[*Robert comforts Ida.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

Why, the poor boy's in a cold sweat.

[*Wipes his brow; William yawns.*]

DR SCHOLZ.

Sh!

[*He and the rest watch William in suspense. William clears his throat, stretches himself, opens and shuts his eyes like one overcome with sleep, lays his head back as if to sleep.*]

DR SCHOLZ (*audibly*).

Thank God!

[*He straightens himself, wipes his forehead with his handkerchief, and half touched, half embarrassed, surveys the others. Ida has fallen on her mother's neck between laughter and tears. Robert, hardly master of his emotion, stands with clasped hands and glances at the others alternately. Augusta goes hastily up and down, her handkerchief pressed to her mouth, and every time she passes William pauses a moment to look at him search-*]

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

ingly. Friebe goes out on tiptoe. The Doctor's eyes meet his wife's; touched, she ventures timidly to approach him, gently seizes his hand and pats his back.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Dear old man!

AUGUSTA (*following her mother, embraces and kisses her father, who suffers it without removing his hand from his wife's.*

My dearest father!

[*Robert with sudden resolution steps up to his father and shakes his hand. Mrs Scholz lets go of the Doctor's hand and leads Ida to him. Dr Scholz looks first at Ida, then at William, and then at Mrs Buchner. Mrs Buchner nods assent. Dr Scholz makes a grimace which expresses "I will say nothing against it, I may be mistaken," and then stretches out his hand to the girl. Ida comes to him, takes his hand, bends over it and kisses it. Dr Scholz immediately draws his hand back, startled. William sighs deeply; all look at him. Augusta goes off to the adjoining room, beckoning Mrs Scholz. Mrs Scholz makes a sign to the Doctor that they should all go into the next room because of William. Dr Scholz nods assentingly and goes off quietly hand in hand with Mrs Scholz. Mrs Buchner, who has signed to Ida to remain with William, also goes.*

ROBERT (*in a low voice*).

Miss Ida, would you—would you leave me to watch him?

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA (*with joyful surprise*).

Yes, indeed.

[*Presses his hand and goes off after the others. Robert draws a chair near to William and sits down, watching him. After a time he takes his pipe from his pocket, is about to light it, then suddenly remembers the presence of his brother and puts it back. William sighs and stretches his limbs.*]

ROBERT (*quickly, cautiously*).

William!

WILLIAM (*clears his throat, opens his eyes, not realising at first where he is, and then as though Robert had only just spoken*).

Yes.

ROBERT.

How do you feel now?

WILLIAM (*after looking thoughtfully at Robert, in a weak voice*).

Robert? Eh?

ROBERT.

Yes, it's I, Robert. How do you feel?

WILLIAM.

Well, (*clears his throat*) quite well, now.

[*He laughs constrainedly, makes a faint attempt to get up, but fails.*]

ROBERT.

Oh, that's a little bit too soon, eh?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

[*William nods, sighs and shuts his eyes again as if exhausted. Pause. William re-opens his eyes fully and speaks low but clearly.*]

WILLIAM.

What has been going on here ?

ROBERT.

I think, Willy, it will be best if we let that be for the present. I'll assure you of *one thing*, it's something that I, for one, would never have believed possible.

WILLIAM (*with emotion*).

Nor I.

ROBERT.

How on earth should a fellow—ah, rubbish! It was absolutely impossible to foresee it. All the same it happened.

WILLIAM.

It comes back to me now, little by little ; it was pleasant.
[*His eyes fill with tears.*]

ROBERT (*with a slight quiver in his voice*).

Sentimental! Just like a woman! There's one thing certain, our judgment was pretty wide of the mark ; we haven't known the old man really ; it's no use thinking we have.

WILLIAM.

Father? No, we were all so blind! so blind!

ROBERT.

Yes, God knows, we were.

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

How strange it seems. The old fellow really cares for us ; he's a real good sort.

ROBERT.

He *can* be, and till now I never knew it.

WILLIAM.

A good deal is beginning to dawn on me.

ROBERT.

With my brain and so on, you know, I have grasped it long enough. Everything that happened had to be ; I never held father responsible—at least, I haven't for years. Certainly not for me—not for any of us. But to-day I have really *felt* it ; and that, you know, is quite another thing — Frankly, it's taken me right off my balance. When I saw him so—so anxious over you, it was like a blow to me ; and now I shall always be thinking :—That was there, living, in us.—Why on earth didn't it show itself before ? In father—in you—and, by God ! in me too. It was there in us ! And there he has been stifling it in himself—father, I mean—yes, and we too, for years and years—

WILLIAM.

I see one thing : we not only show a different self to every one of our fellow-creatures, but we *are* fundamentally different to each.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

ROBERT.

But why must it be so with us? Why must we for ever keep each other at such a distance?

WILLIAM.

I'll tell you why; because we have no natural goodness of heart. Take Ida for instance: what you have got at by hard thinking is natural to her. She never sits in judgment, she treats everything so gently, with such sympathy, and that spares people so much—you understand—and I believe it is that—

ROBERT (*abruptly, rises*).

How do you feel now?

WILLIAM.

I feel relieved—free.

ROBERT.

Ah! what's the use of all that—H'm! what was I going to say—Perhaps it will turn out all right for you.

WILLIAM.

What do you mean?

ROBERT.

What should I mean? For you and—for Ida, of course.

WILLIAM.

Perhaps! Those two have such a power—Mrs Buchner too—but particularly Ida. I have thought that might save me—At first I checked myself—

ROBERT (*thoughtfully*).

Yes they have! they have a power, and just because of that—at first—I—to be frank, I blamed you.

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

I felt it.

ROBERT.

Well just think. I heard something about an engagement, and then I saw Ida; she was so merry, singing, up and down stairs, without the least thought of—

WILLIAM (*rising*).

Well I understood you, I even felt you were right. What would you have!

ROBERT.

Well—I too am—I must admit it's quite a different matter now—As I—as I said—it was chiefly—Quite jolly again?

WILLIAM.

Perfectly.

ROBERT.

Then you'll come along soon?

WILLIAM.

I'll only just—you go first.

ROBERT.

Right. (*Going, stops.*) I can't help it—I've got to tell you. Your whole conduct—about father, and—altogether—it's something to admire. With my cursed prejudices—I too—downright accused you. One—devil take it! It's a long time since I've had such a desire to spit at myself. You're glad to hear that, eh? Well, perhaps you'll do me the favour

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

to—if I—I've certainly done my level best to vex you since you've been home, so—I'm sorry for it—there!

WILLIAM.

X Brother! [They shake hands warmly.]

ROBERT (*takes his hand quietly out of William's, brings out his pipe, lights it and puffs smoke, then says as if to himself*).

(Acrobatic soul!) (*Puff, puff.*) Well, well! (*He turns to go; before opening the door R. he speaks over his shoulder to William.*) I'll send her out to you.

WILLIAM.

Ah, never mind!—Well, if you really—
[Robert nods and disappears through the doorway. William draws a deep breath, deep joy at what has happened possesses him.]

IDA (*comes from the adjoining room, flies into his arms.*)

Willy!!!

WILLIAM.

Now—you—you two golden hearts have set me free. A new life! You can't think how that inspires me. I seem quite great in my own eyes!—Ah, Ida, I can only now realise—how frightfully that weighed upon me, and now I feel such strength—such strength, Ida! You may rely on me, I will show him what the “good-for-nothing” can do. I'll give father proofs. I will show him there is something in me: strength, living power as an artist, before which all shall bow—the stiffest necks shall bend—I

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

feel it! Only that has crippled me. Now my fingers are twitching! I could compose, create—

IDA.

Ah you see! Now it's all right! Now I have your own old self again—Dearest, I could sob—I could—shout for joy. Wasn't I right? Nothing was dead in you, it only slept. It will all wake anew, as I always told you. It *has* awaked—

[She embraces and kisses him. Still embracing they pace the room in silent happiness.]

WILLIAM (*stopping, and looking with happy bewilderment first into her eyes, then round the room*).

In these cold dreary walls—what joy—like blooming spring!

[They kiss each other, closely entwined in silent happiness. They continue walking.]

IDA (*sings softly to the same tune as her song in Act I. roguishly*).

Now you see how right I was.

[Mrs Scholz comes a step into the room, sees the lovers and is going quickly out.]

IDA (*noticing her, breaks off her song, and runs up to her*).

You're not to run away, little mother-in-law!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah, why not! You don't need me. (*William embraces and kisses his mother and helps to pull her into the room.*) (*Crossly*) You are so awkward! You are—you are pulling me to pieces.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

WILLIAM.

Oh, mother! what does that matter to-day—Mother!
You see quite another man before you! (*Between
his mother and Ida, holding a hand of each.*) Come,
little old mother, look at one another in the eyes,
give each other your hands.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Silly fellow!

WILLIAM.

Kiss each other!

MRS SCHOLZ (*after wiping her mouth with her apron*).
There, stupid boy, if nothing else will do.—You needn't
use force to us.—There, Ida!
[*They kiss each other laughing.*]

WILLIAM.

And now—peace!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Unberufen, my boy!
[*Friebe comes out of the kitchen carrying a steaming
punch-bowl, goes towards the next room.*]

WILLIAM.

Oho! What have we here? Is it good, Friebe?

FRIEBE (*crossing room*).

Ay, if you was to set thirty such like in front of me, not a
gulp would I let down my throat.

WILLIAM.

Really not, Friebe?

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

FRIEBE.

There was a time—ay, yes—but now I've sworn off, ages ago. Now I drink only—mostly bitters. [*Goes out.*]

IDA (*who has been tying William's necktie and pulling his coat straight*).

There! now—

WILLIAM.

Thank you, darling.—Is father in good spirits?

MRS SCHOLZ.

He's telling his tales. Often one can't understand a word.

WILLIAM.

My heart is beginning to beat again.

MRS SCHOLZ.

If only Robert would not drink so much!

WILLIAM.

Ah, mother, to-day!—to-day nothing matters! To-day—

IDA.

Now come along quickly, before you—

WILLIAM (*to Mrs Scholz*).

You're coming too?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Only be off with you! Be off!

[*Ida and William go into the next room. Mrs Scholz stands thinking, draws her hand over her brow, and moved by a sudden idea, goes to the door of the adjoining room where she listens.*]

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

FRIEBE (*steps in through the same door. He is evidently excited*).

Missis!

MRS SCHOLZ.

What do you want?

FRIEBE (*whispering mysteriously*).

I've got a—surprise, Mrs Sch—olz—

MRS SCHOLZ (*shrinking back*).

You've been drinking! You—

FRIEBE.

I've been on the look out, all sorts of ways, and I've—got something to tell you.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well? yes, yes! Only say quickly what you've got to say.

FRIEBE.

H'm, I only mean—

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, speak then, Friebe.

FRIEBE.

I only mean—that's not the way. In my position there are many things I mustn't talk about. I only mean your husband—he can't possibly keep it up much longer—

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh Jesus! Jesus! Friebe! has he—has he—complained? then, O Jesus! is he ill?

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

FRIEBE.

Ah, as to that, what should I know?

MRS SCHOLZ.

But what has he complained of?

FRIEBE.

That—I wasn't to—tell—

MRS SCHOLZ.

Is it true though? (*Friebe nods.*) But he can't have spoken of his death?

FRIEBE.

Ah, more than that,—he's said pretty things!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Now for goodness sake do try and speak clearly. Drunken creature!

FRIEBE (*angry*).

Yes, I'm—neither the gardener nor the boot boy; and as to what may happen—I shouldn't need—in every position what I want most—in my position, but no!—Now you have the whole thing clear!

[*He wheels round, goes off into the kitchen.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

The man's gone crazy.

[*Ida enters through door of the adjoining room, shuts it behind her; opening it a little again she calls into the room.*]

IDA.

Wait, good people. Quiet! No impatience!

WILLIAM (*pressing into the room*).

But I want to help.

IDA.

No one else, then.

[*Ida and William light Christmas Tree candles.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

But, William, listen a minute.

WILLIAM (*busy*).

Directly, little mother.—Just ready.

[*The Christmas Tree, the candelabra and the chandelier are lighted. Ida removes a large table cover which has been thrown over presents on the table. William goes to his mother.*]

IDA (*calls through door R*).

Now!

[*Mrs Scholz, who is just going to speak to William, is interrupted by the entrance of Dr Scholz, who is followed by Augusta, Robert and Mrs Buchner. Dr Scholz, his face reddened with drinking.*]

DR SCHOLZ (*with affected astonishment*).

Ah! Ah!

MRS BUCHNER.

Fairylike!

[*Augusta smiles constrainedly; Robert goes about pipe in mouth at first embarrassed, then smiling more and more ironically. William notices this with great annoyance.*]

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA (*draws William to the table where the presents lie*).
Don't laugh at me, Willy. [*Gives him his purse.*]

WILLIAM.

But—Ida—I begged you—

IDA.

I crocheted it once for father. The year before his death
he used it often, and so I thought—

WILLIAM (*with increasing embarrassment under
Robert's eyes*).

Yes—yes.—Ever so many thanks, Ida!

ROBERT.

Things only want to be more practical.

MRS SCHOLZ (*who has been led to the table by
Mrs Buchner*).

But what have you been doing! You cannot—I have
nothing for *you*. (*Seeing a crocheted shawl.*) No,
no! Only think!—You crocheted that for me
—an old woman like me? Well then, I *do* thank
you, many, many times. [*They kiss one another.*]

MRS BUCHNER.

Ah! I'm only too glad if it pleases you.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Beautiful—wonderful—lovely. The time and the trouble!
I never!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

IDA.

I've something for you too, Mr Robert, but you mustn't laugh at me!

ROBERT (*getting scarlet*).

Ah! what now?

IDA.

I thought—your pipe—the next thing it will be burning your nose and so I've had pity on you, and yesterday I— (*Shows a new pipe which she has hitherto held behind her back and gives it to him.*) Here is the masterpiece! [All amused.]

ROBERT (*without taking the pipe*).

You're joking, Miss Ida!

IDA.

Ah well!—But I'm in deadly earnest over the present!

ROBERT.

No, no, I can't believe that.

MRS SCHOLZ (*aside to William*).

Robert is unbearable!

IDA.

Ah, but no—really—

ROBERT.

You see, this thing here—I've got used to it—and of course you don't really mean it!

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

IDA (*her eyes full of tears, conquering her hurt feelings ;
with trembling voice*).

Well, then, if you'd rather—

[*Puts the present back on the table.*]

MRS BUCHNER (*who during the foregoing has several
times spoken to Ida, now hurries to her*).

Ida, darling, have you forgotten ?

IDA.

What, mamma ?

MRS BUCHNER.

You know! (*To the others*) You're all going to hear
something.

[*Ida, glad to hide her emotion in this way, goes
hand in hand with her mother into the next room.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*to Robert*).

Why did you spoil her pleasure for her ?

WILLIAM (*twisting the ends of his moustache nervously ;
walks up and down casting threatening glances at
Robert*).

ROBERT.

What now ? How do you mean ? I don't know what
you want.

AUGUSTA.

Well, it certainly wasn't exactly friendly.

ROBERT.

Do leave me alone. Besides, what should I do with it ?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

[*Song and piano accompaniment from next room interrupt speakers. All look at one another, startled.*]

IDA'S VOICE.

Oh, come little children,
Oh, come one and all,
Come here to the manger
In Bethlehem's stall.
Behold all the gladness
This wonderful night,
Our Father in Heaven
Has wrought in his might.

[*Dr Scholz, noticing Robert's behaviour, has grown steadily gloomier. At the beginning of the song he looks nervously round like someone who dreads being attacked and seeks as far as possible without being noticed to establish a certain distance between himself and the others.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*at the beginning of the song*).

Ah! how beautiful!

[*She listens for a moment with devotion, then breaks into sobs. Robert moves slowly about; as the song continues makes a grimace, as if to say, "Well, this is the last straw"; walks further on, smiles ironically and several times shakes his head. Passing Augusta, he says something to her half audibly. Augusta, partly touched by the song, now breaks out. William has been standing by the table, nervously drumming with his fingers, a prey to conflicting emotions; now his face reddens with resentment. Robert towards*

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

the end of the song appears to suffer physically. The impossibility of escaping from the impression of Ida's tones appears to torture and embitter him more and more. Just at the end of the verse, a word escapes him involuntarily like the fragment of a soliloquy.

ROBERT.

Child's play! (*in a biting contemptuous tone*).

[*All, including the Doctor, have heard him, and turn to him with a shocked expression.*]

MRS SCHOLZ and AUGUSTA.

Robert!

[*Dr Scholz suppresses an explosion of violent anger. William, white with rage, steps up to Robert.*]

MRS SCHOLZ (*rushing towards him, embraces him*).

William—for my sake!

WILLIAM.

All right, mother!

[*He goes up and down controlling himself with difficulty. At this moment the second verse begins; scarcely are the first tones heard when with sudden resolution he goes to the door of the adjoining room.*]

IDA.

There lies he, oh children,
On hay and on straw,
And Joseph and Mary
Look on him with awe.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

The honest souled shepherds
Kneel praying for love ;
The choir of the angels
Sweeps singing above.

MRS SCHOLZ (*standing in his way*).

William, what are you going to do ?

WILLIAM (*breaking out*).

She sha'n't sing any more.

AUGUSTA.

You must be out of your mind !

WILLIAM.

Let me alone. I say she shall stop.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah, but do—you really are—Well then, you won't see *me*
any more this evening.

ROBERT.

Stop, mother, let him see to it. It's his affair.

WILLIAM.

Robert, don't you go too far. Take my advice ; you've
already made one touching scene ; it only leaves
you more unbearable.

ROBERT.

Quite true ; made a touching scene ! That's just what I
should call it.

[*William goes again towards the side room.*]

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ (*again restraining him*).

Oh God-oh-God-oh-God! My boy, why must you stop
her? [The second verse comes to an end.]

WILLIAM.

Because you're none of you worthy of it, not one of you!

ROBERT (*stepping close to William with an insolently
expressive look in his eyes*).

You are, I suppose?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh Lord! you're beginning again!

[The third verse begins.]

The children are bringing
With joy and good cheer,
Milk, butter and honey
To Bethlehem here;
A basket of apples
All yellow and red,
A snowy white lambkin
With flower-crowned head.

WILLIAM.

She *shall* stop!

MRS SCHOLZ (*once more restraining him*).

My boy!!!

WILLIAM.

Simply beneath contempt! It is blasphemy! It is a
crime against these people if we—I—yes, on my
honour, I'm ashamed of you all.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

AUGUSTA (*piqued*).

No, after all we are not so very specially bad and contemptible.

WILLIAM.

Aug—it makes me sick.

AUGUSTA.

Well, let it!—Yes, yes, of course *I'm* to be shoved into the background; you must always find fault with your sister. Whatever *she* does is wrong. It's not a bit fair. But your Miss Ida—

WILLIAM (*beside himself, interrupting*).

Don't dare to speak her name!!

AUGUSTA.

The idea! I shall talk about Ida if—

WILLIAM.

Leave her name out of it, I tell you.

AUGUSTA.

You've gone mad, I think. I *shall*—after all she's not an angel from heaven.

WILLIAM (*screaming at her*).

Silence, I say!

AUGUSTA (*turning her back*).

Pah! you're just in love!

WILLIAM (*seizing her roughly by the shoulder*).

You creature! I—

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

ROBERT (*seizing William's arm, speaks slowly, emphasising each word*).

Perhaps, William, you intend again— ?

WILLIAM.

Devil!

AUGUSTA.

You say that—you, who lifted your hand against your own father!

DR SCHOLZ (*his voice trembling with rage, in a tone of absolute command*).

Augusta!—leave the room—this instant!!!

AUGUSTA.

Well!—I should like to know—

DR SCHOLZ.

Leave the room this minute.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh, dear God, why can't I die? Augusta, do you hear?
(*crying*) Obey your father!

ROBERT.

H'm—mother I should blame her if she did. She's not a little child any longer. Times have changed a bit, God knows.

DR SCHOLZ.

But I—I have not changed. I am the master in this house—I'll prove it to you.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

ROBERT.

Ridiculous!

DR SCHOLZ (*screaming*).

Scoundrels!—Wretches!—I disinherit you—I'll throw you
on the streets.

ROBERT.

That's downright funny.

DR SCHOLZ (*masters a frightful outburst of rage and
speaks with ominous quietness and firmness*).

You or I—one of us leaves this house this moment.

ROBERT.

I, of course, with the greatest of pleasure.

MRS SCHOLZ (*half commanding, half entreating*).

Robert—stay!

DR SCHOLZ.

He shall go.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Fritz, listen to me. He is the only one—all these long
lonely years, who didn't forget us. He—

DR SCHOLZ.

He or I!—

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah, give way, Fritz—for my sake!

DR SCHOLZ.

Leave me alone—*He or I!*

ACT II. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah, I won't ask you to meet each other—it can be arranged quite easily—but—

DR SCHOLZ.

Very well, I give way—I give way to you and your brood. You and your brood—from to-day you have won the victory!

WILLIAM.

Stay, dear father—or if you go, let me go with you this time.

DR SCHOLZ (*involuntarily stepping back between anger and terror*).

Leave me alone! Good-for-nothing! (*fumbling among his things*) Scoundrels and loafers!—Good-for-nothings!

WILLIAM (*boiling over*).

Father, you call us that—when it's your doing that—Ah, Father dear, no, no, I will say nothing. Let me go with you. I will stay with you. Let me atone for all that I— (*Laying his hand on his father's arm.*)

DR SCHOLZ (*as though paralysed with fright and horror, draws back*).

Let go! I tell you—The army of the oppressors shall insuredly—shall assuredly be brought to shame! Are they these people—these mighty ones and these mighty ones—are they men? A man like me, who has his faults, but still for all that is through and through—and up and down—and short and sweet.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT II.

WILLIAM.

Father! father! dear father, come to yourself. Be your own self.

DR SCHOLZ (*swaying with the rhythm of the words, half aloud*).

And short and sweet—and through and through—

WILLIAM (*embracing him, instinctively seeking to control his gestures*).

Control yourself, pull yourself together!

DR SCHOLZ (*defending himself; imploring like a little child*).

Ah! don't beat me! Don't punish me!

WILLIAM.

But for God's sake—

DR SCHOLZ.

Don't beat me!—don't beat me—again!

[*He makes cramped efforts to free himself from William's arms.*]

WILLIAM.

May my hand perish!—Father dear, don't think such a thing—dear father, don't dream it—

[*Dr Scholz frees himself, flies from William calling for help.*]

WILLIAM.

Father, you strike *me*, you beat *me*!

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

DR SCHOLZ.

Please! please, please help me.

[Ida appears at the door of the room, deathly white.

WILLIAM (*rushes to his father, puts his arms round him again*).

Strike me!

DR SCHOLZ (*sinking on a chair with William's arms still round him*).

I—ah—ah—a—ah! I think—its—all over—with me.

WILLIAM.

Father!

[Mrs Scholz and Augusta seize one another in terror. Robert, deathly white, has not moved. His face has an expression of unshakable determination.]

ACT III

Twilight. All lights are extinguished except a few on the chandelier, and one on the Christmas tree. In front, near the stove, William sits at the table, his back towards the adjoining room, sunk in dreary hopeless meditation. Robert and Mrs Scholz enter together from next room.

MRS SCHOLZ (*looking worn out, in lowered tones*).

No, my boy, don't tell me! Now there's no knowing what next. As soon as trouble comes—Then, ah well!

ROBERT.

You're not alone now, mother.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah, just listen to you! You know better. It's too absurd. Where can you be off to in the middle of the night!

ROBERT.

Oh, there are always trains and I *must* go. I really can't stand it any longer; besides, it's best for all of us!

MRS SCHOLZ (*whimpering*).

These last years it has always been pleasant. And now they've come back!—Since those Buchners came, everything's turned upside down.

ROBERT.

Be glad that you have them, mother.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh, I could have managed quite well by myself.

ROBERT.

Father seems able to bear none of us about him—?

MRS SCHOLZ (*crying*).

Just as if I had done him any harm! Surely I have always been the same—I have always done my best—Do be just, Robert!—I have cooked him his hot dinners, he's had his warm stockings—

ROBERT.

Ah, leave it alone, mother! What good is this everlasting lamentation?

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Yes, that's what you say. It's all very well for you!
But if you have worried yourself sick all your life—
if one has beaten one's brain to know :—Have I done
this right? have I done *that* right?—and then strange
people come, and one sees them preferred!

ROBERT.

Ida is with him still?

MRS SCHOLZ.

A perfect stranger!—Ah, I might as well be dead—and
that lump!—that Friebe!—Creature!—The airs he
gives himself!—But Gussie's let him have it!—Gussie
talked to him pretty straight! The fellow's as
impudent—he wanted to push her out of the room.
The girl was beside herself!—His own daughter!
No—You children! What my life has been!—I
wouldn't wish a dog to lead it.

ROBERT (*with a little sigh, involuntarily*).

Father too!

MRS SCHOLZ.

What?

ROBERT.

Oh, nothing. I only said, father too.

MRS SCHOLZ.

What about him?

ROBERT.

Well, father too has had a good deal to bear.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well not from me, anyhow. I haven't troubled him much.
I've made no very great claims.

ROBERT (*sceptically*).

Hja—tja—tja!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Just wait till I'm in my grave, then he'll begin to see—

ROBERT.

Ah, leave it alone, mother! I've heard that hundreds of
times.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Maybe! You'll see too, and before very long either.

ROBERT.

Ah, mother, I don't deny that you've had a lot to bear
with through father. You've both suffered. But I
don't see why you—

MRS SCHOLZ.

Stuff and nonsense. I should like to know what has *he*
ever wanted for?

ROBERT (*incautiously*).

To be understood, if you will insist on knowing.

MRS SCHOLZ.

I can't make myself cleverer than I am.

ROBERT.

Nobody asked you to try. Besides—it's the merest folly
to talk of it so much.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Now there's an end of everything—(*Crying.*) After all,
it's not my doing that he lies there ill, and—

ROBERT.

I never said it was.

MRS SCHOLZ.

You did. That's what you *did* say.

ROBERT.

Ah, mother—I'd better go. I—mother, I really can't stand
any more.

MRS SCHOLZ.

No! I should just like to know what I have to reproach
myself with. I have a good conscience.

ROBERT.

Then keep it, in God's name keep it! (*With a movement
of self-defence*) Only, *leave off*.

MRS SCHOLZ.

You mean that money business, I suppose?

ROBERT.

I mean nothing.

MRS SCHOLZ.

My parents earned it hardly enough, no woman would
have put up with it! Your father just pitched it
out of window.

ROBERT.

But your uncle lied to you about it.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

MRS SCHOLZ.

You can't be sure of that.

ROBERT.

And father earned the whole over again.

MRS SCHOLZ.

He might as well have gambled with it.

[*Robert laughs bitterly.*]

MRS SCHOLZ.

I'm only a poor ignorant woman. Your father was always above me. His mother was quite a lady too. But my father was once as poor as a rat. I'll never get the chill of poverty out of my blood! I can't alter myself. Well, it's all the same!—for the year or two of life that's left me!—The Lord will deliver me in his own good time.

ROBERT.

I would rather be delivered *from* the Lord.

MRS SCHOLZ.

For shame! What a scoundrelly speech! Delivered from the Lord.—I might as well take a dagger and stab myself here in the heart—Frightful!—Delivered from the Lord!—Where should I have been if it had not been for the Lord?—Are you really going away, Robert?

ROBERT (*already on the stairs*).

Oh, be quiet, mother! It's peace I want, peace!—

[*Goes up the stairs.*]

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh dear, dear—yes—amongst you all, it isn't an easy life!
(*To William who has remained the whole time at the table without paying attention to them*) Just think!—
You!—Robert's going!

WILLIAM.

All the same to me!

MRS SCHOLZ.

What are you sitting there for?—That's no use. Do be sensible.

WILLIAM (*sighing*).

Ah, yes!

MRS SCHOLZ.

And sighing's no use! Look at me, at my age—and if I were to squat myself down like you!—What's done is done! There's no changing it now. Look here! Read something! Get up, take a book and amuse yourself!

WILLIAM (*sighing*).

Oh mother, do let me alone—I'm troubling nobody!—
Has Friebe come back from the Doctor's?

MRS SCHOLZ.

No, that he hasn't. It's what I always say, as sure as one wants a doctor, there isn't one to be found.

WILLIAM.

It is serious, isn't it, especially if—*that* were to happen again?

MRS SCHOLZ.

Ah God! Who knows!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

[*William stares at his mother, then with sudden passionate sobs lets his head fall in his hands.*]

Yes, yes, my boy, who would have thought it! I'm not saying—I blame no one, but just to-day you surely might have kept from quarrelling.—However, we must just hope for the best.—At least his mind's not wandering any more. If Ida only doesn't overlook anything! Any one of us would have a hundred times more experience. Why he should have taken so to Ida!—I don't bite!—Though I will say in other ways—Ida—she's really a good girl—and you of all people! (*patting him on his shoulders*). You may thank the Lord! You might wait long enough before you'd find another one like Ida! (*Cautiously, confidentially*) Tell me,—are the Buchners well off?

WILLIAM (*roused*).

Oh leave me alone! How should I know!—What do I care!

MRS SCHOLZ.

What now!—I suppose I've a right to ask!—You're a perfect bear!

WILLIAM.

Ah mother, let me alone.—If you have a spark of pity for me, let me alone.—Don't trouble about me, let me alone.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh yes, of course, I'm always in the way. An old woman—good for nothing but to snap at.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

[*Augusta and Mrs Buchner come hastily out of Room R.*

AUGUSTA.

Mother!

MRS SCHOLZ.

Oh Lord! What now?

AUGUSTA.

Friebe has just come.

MRS BUCHNER.

Friebe has brought no doctor with him.

AUGUSTA.

Father asked him, and he said—

MRS BUCHNER.

He won't *have any* doctor!

AUGUSTA.

He's furious, he'll throw him out of the room.

MRS BUCHNER.

Friebe won't go again.

AUGUSTA.

You come and speak to Friebe.

MRS BUCHNER.

Yes, *you* speak to him. It is so necessary!

AUGUSTA.

A doctor *must* come—or I'll go myself; I'm not afraid,
not if I have to run all the way to Friedrichshafen.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

MRS SCHOLZ.

Well, why not?—But it's the middle of the night, won't—just let me come.

[*Mrs Buchner, Mrs Scholz and Augusta go off hastily. Mrs Buchner is scarcely out before she returns. Whilst speaking she has looked several times furtively and with a grieved expression at William, who is still in the same place, silent and gloomy. Mrs Buchner looks round to make sure that William and she are quite alone. At first quickly, then with hesitation she approaches him.*

WILLIAM (*raising his head as she goes to him*).

What do you want?—I told you everything before.

MRS BUCHNER.

But I wouldn't believe you; I couldn't picture it to myself.

WILLIAM.

And now you believe it?

MRS BUCHNER.

I—don't—know.

WILLIAM.

Why do you lie to me?—Say straight out, yes. It was perfectly natural that it would all turn out like this; so ridiculously natural. How in the world I could have been so blind!

MRS BUCHNER (*with feverish eagerness*).

William, I take you to-day as I always have, for an honest, honourable man. I assure you that not for

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

one moment have I doubted you—even now—when all at once I'm so afraid and anxious.

WILLIAM (*lifts himself up, draws a deep breath as though oppressed*).

It's only what I—I've known it all along.

MRS BUCHNER.

I come to you, William, I speak to you frankly;—it has all come upon me so suddenly. All at once I am so terribly anxious about Ida.

WILLIAM.

I must confess—only just now—

MRS BUCHNER.

I know well you love the child. Nobody could love her more truly! I know that with all your strength you will try to make my daughter happy;—it won't be your *will* that will fail, but now I have—I have seen and discovered so many things. It's only now that I really understand much—much of what you told me. I *didn't* understand you; I took you for a pessimist—in some things I scarcely took you seriously!—I came here with a firm, happy faith. I'm really ashamed! The confidence I had in myself!—I, to fancy I could influence such natures!—a weak, simple creature like me! But now I'm uneasy about it all—now all at once I feel my heavy responsibility. I am responsible for my child—for my Ida. Every mother is responsible for her child! Only tell me, William, tell me yourself, that it will all come right—Say to me, “we shall

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

be happy," you and Ida. Convince me that my fear, my dread, is needless—*William*— [A pause.

WILLIAM.

Why did you let it go so far?—I warned you—and warned you. What did I say to you? I said, all of us, every one in this family, are sick, incurables—I most of all. That we all drag with us—"Don't give your daughter to a maimed creature," I said to you—Why wouldn't you believe?

MRS BUCHNER.

I don't know. I myself don't know.

WILLIAM.

Now you have lulled me to rest, weakened my conscience—and now I have been half mad with happiness—I have tasted—lived through moments! and others besides. The most frightful battle of my life, and *now* you demand—now one must consider—perhaps, yes, perhaps—

MRS BUCHNER.

William! I honour you!—I know that you would make any sacrifice. But Ida!—If it should be too late for her—if it were to be her ruin!

WILLIAM.

Why couldn't you believe me? You don't know what that cost me; now I have built it up by painful steps—step by step—so painfully! This place lay far behind me—I was almost saved. Now to pull it all down. Why need you have let it go so far? *Why?*—

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

MRS BUCHNER (*with tears*).

I don't know! I myself don't know! I brought the child up. She was all in all to me; to work for her happiness has been all I have lived for. Then—you came into our house. I grew fond of you—I thought of your happiness too, I—perhaps I ought not to have done that. I thought perhaps just as much of *your* happiness—and—who knows?—In the end, most of all—of—*your* happiness!

[*During a minute she and William look startled into each other's eyes.*]

WILLIAM.

Mrs Buchner!!!

[*Mrs Buchner, hiding her face in her hands, as if in shame, goes off crying through the stairway. William follows her mechanically a few steps, stops, tries to master his inward excitement, then suddenly, shaken with weeping, leans for support against the wall. Ida enters, her face pale, looking serious and careworn, comes with gentle steps to William, embraces him, pressing her cheek to his.*]

IDA.

Ah, Willy, sad days are coming, and, and, yes, Willy, bright days will come again. You mustn't give way like that—so hopelessly.

WILLIAM (*stammering passionately*).

Ida!—You only! Dearest, sweetest! Only say how I can—how could I bear my life now without you!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

Your voice, your words, your whole sweet wondrous presence, your hands—your gentle, faithful hands.

IDA.

And what of *me*?—What do you think of my life without *you*? No, love!—we will cling to each other and never let go, close, close, and however long it lasts—

WILLIAM.

Yes, yes! but supposing anything were to happen?

IDA.

Oh, don't speak like that!

WILLIAM.

I only mean—one can never tell—one of us might die.

IDA.

Ah, we are young.

WILLIAM.

Even then!—One day it must happen, some day, and I, at any rate, shall never live to be old.

IDA (*passionately*).

Then I shall fasten my arms round you—press myself to you—Then I shall go with you.

WILLIAM.

Ida! That is what one *says*. But you would never really do it.

IDA.

I would do it!

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

You think so now. You don't know how quickly one forgets.

IDA.

I could not breathe without you.

WILLIAM.

That is what one fancies—

IDA.

No, no, no, William!—

WILLIAM.

But to love like that, would be a kind of madness. One shouldn't put everything on the turn of one card.

IDA.

I—don't quite understand you.

WILLIAM.

Why—I—you see (*in irritable tones*). Ugh! Darling, it's not an enlivening subject!—How's Father?

IDA.

He's asleep now! but what *is* the matter with you?

WILLIAM (*walking about*).

The feeling will come, no one knows how. (*Suddenly grinding his teeth*) I tell you, there are moments—when that rage of despair seizes you, those are the moments—I can well understand—in those moments a man might throw himself head first from five

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

stories high on to the pavement.—The idea becomes positively alluring.

IDA.

God forbid! You mustn't give way to such ideas, Willy!

WILLIAM.

Why not, I should like to know? What should such fellows as I do, crawling between heaven and earth?—Useless creatures! Exterminate themselves! That would be something. They would at least have done *one* useful thing.

IDA.

After all, it is not a thing to admire. You are overwrought and exhausted.

WILLIAM (*in sharp, unyielding tones*).

Leave me in peace, can't you? What do you understand of all that.—(*Shocked at himself, adds*) Ah, love! You must forgive me. You had better leave me now—I can not bear to wound you. And in this mood, as I feel now, I can't answer for myself.

[*Ida kisses him silently on the mouth, then goes into the next room. William looks after her, stands still, shows fright and astonishment in his face, and strikes his forehead, like one who has detected himself on the track of an evil thought. Meantime, Robert has come downstairs. Robert, his hat in his right hand, overcoat and rug over his arm, rug straps in his left hand, goes to the table and lays his things down on it.*

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM (*after he has watched him a moment or two*).
Where are you going?

ROBERT.

Away.

WILLIAM.

Now?

ROBERT.

Why not? (*spreading out his straps*) I've had enough of this and to spare. In future mother—mother will celebrate Christmas without me! (*Looks round at stove*) It's cold here.

WILLIAM.

It's freezing outside.

ROBERT (*rolling up his rug*).

There!—Is it? It was thawing about ten o'clock.

WILLIAM.

There's a change.

ROBERT.

How's one to get down the mountain and keep one's footing?

WILLIAM.

There's a fine moon.

ROBERT.

Yes, but still—

WILLIAM.

He's not delirious any longer.

ROBERT.

H'm, h'm!

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

WILLIAM.

He won't have a doctor.

ROBERT.

H'm, h'm!

WILLIAM.

It's all come so suddenly, one hardly—

ROBERT.

H'm, yes!

WILLIAM.

It must have been latent in him.

ROBERT.

Of course, or he would not have come home.

WILLIAM.

I dread to think what'll come of it.

ROBERT.

What's one to do?

WILLIAM.

On my soul, I don't know what *I* should do if he died. Conscious as I am, knowing what I now know!—I really did not know, and *now* the added remorse, the gnawing of conscience! Ah! well, what's the use of it all?

ROBERT.

Eh! as to that! one would have enough to do. The old fellow is different, not what we imagined, that's true enough! But that doesn't change matters.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

I tell you, it is sacred earnest to me—I would lay down this pitiful life of mine gladly, if it would do him any good.

ROBERT.

To my thinking, there's no sense in that. Now just look here! I go back to my hot little den of an office, sit with my back to the fire, cross my legs under the table, light this same old pipe, and write—in peace and quietness of mind, I hope—the same old jokes, you know them,—the old chestnuts—African traveller—nearly spent—h'm, and then I generally bring along a caravan, which takes the article along with it.—My chief is well satisfied, it gets copied in as many papers as possible—and, the main thing is that—! Well, I sit there, and the gas jet hisses over my head all day—a glance now and then into the court—the courtyard of a warehouse like that has something marvellous about it—something even romantic, I can tell you—in a word I'm not troubled with any bees in *my* bonnet.

WILLIAM.

Rather be dead once for all.

ROBERT.

Matter of taste!—For me, that's just an ideal nook—Is one to be always getting shaken off one's balance, always letting oneself be driven crazy?—It'll take me a good two or three days now to pick up my scattered philosophy.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

WILLIAM.

Say what you will, I call that cowardly.

ROBERT.

And then—If it is! Sooner or later, you will come to think as I do. Father himself had at last got to that standpoint. Father and you, you are as alike as two peas. You are both idealists of the same sort. In '38 father started on the barricades, and he finishes up as a hypochondriacal hermit—One must get accustomed to the world and to oneself *in time*, that's the thing; before one has finished sowing one's wild oats.

Person
accustomed }
}

WILLIAM.

Or else work at oneself, to become something different.

ROBERT.

I think I see myself! What I am, I am. I have the right to *be*, whatever I am.

WILLIAM.

Then claim your right openly.

ROBERT.

Not I, for I mean to *have* it. The Philistine morality-mongers are in the majority at present. Anyhow it's time for me to be off. And if I were to offer you a bit of advice, it would be, beware of so-called good intentions!

Person
intention }
}

WILLIAM (*coldly*).

How do you mean?

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

ROBERT.

Simply that ; it's no use to think of accomplishing something which entirely contradicts one's whole natural bent.

WILLIAM.

As, for instance ?

ROBERT.

Oh!—for instance, fellows come to me sometimes, who babble ideals to me till my head swims. Fight for the ideals of humanity, and—God knows what all ! I—fight for other people!—Childish!—Why, and what for ? But *you*, that just suits you. You would rush round like a runaway thief. “What a wretch I have been,” you would keep on telling yourself ! Aren't I right ? Well, and then on the top would come the good intentions, and they get hold of you, I know. *I* used to go about hung round with hundreds of those good intentions—for years together—and it's not pleasant, I can tell you.

WILLIAM.

I don't really know what you are driving at.

ROBERT.

Nothing very definite. This unrest, from which you are suffering now, has no doubt other causes—At least I—if I once noticed—there was a time when I went through something of the sort, but once I noticed that the business was likely to be stronger than I—I generally made short work of it, and turned my back.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

WILLIAM.

Is that a hint?

ROBERT.

Hint? I didn't know—well, once more—good luck to you and—

WILLIAM.

But just tell me—it has a certain objective interest for me—only because—

ROBERT.

Pray, what do you want to know?

WILLIAM.

Just now you said something.

ROBERT.

How—just now?

WILLIAM.

When we were speaking of father.

ROBERT.

Ah, true, yes ;—what did I say?

WILLIAM.

You said, it might perhaps turn out well for Ida and me.

ROBERT.

Ah, yes, your engagement ;—was that what I said?

WILLIAM.

That's what you said.

ROBERT.

H'm, I said many things.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

That is to say, you have changed your mind about a good deal of what you said.

ROBERT.

Quite true, so I have.

WILLIAM.

And even—about that—very thing—

ROBERT.

Your engagement?

WILLIAM.

Yes.

ROBERT.

It's important to you?

WILLIAM.

Yes, perhaps.

ROBERT.

Yes.

WILLIAM.

You no longer think—that we—

ROBERT.

No.

WILLIAM.

Good—Thanks—You are candid—I thank you—But let us suppose,—say that I *did* turn my back on the whole affair—leave on one side all thought of what it would cost *me*, say I were to go straight off with you—then what—about—Ida?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

ROBERT.

H'm, Ida—Ida?—(*Shrugs his shoulders*). H'm, yes. That's not so quickly—at least—that wouldn't trouble me over much.

WILLIAM.

Ah! That's your old selfishness!!! Now I recognise you.

ROBERT.

Selfish? How? No, that's just your mistake! I am not deeply enough interested to be selfish—interested in this particular matter, I mean. I really don't believe—

WILLIAM.

I know better. You don't suppose *you* can teach me how to understand this girl? Once for all, it *is* so. Depend upon it—she has that sort of feeling for me, which—well, I can't alter it. You needn't think me conceited—But, you see, what's to become of her, if I should go?

ROBERT.

H'm, you really ask yourself—that—seriously—

WILLIAM.

Most seriously—I do—indeed.

ROBERT.

Just oblige me by answering this one question first. If you were to *marry*, what would Ida become then?

WILLIAM.

That no one can know.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

ROBERT.

Oh yes, but one can:—mother!

WILLIAM.

As if mother is to be compared with Ida!

ROBERT.

But you with father.

WILLIAM.

Every man is a *new* man.

ROBERT.

That's what you'd *like* to believe! Let it alone. You're asking too much of yourself. You yourself are the embodied argument against it.

WILLIAM.

I don't believe it.

ROBERT.

You *know* it well enough.

WILLIAM.

After all one can make oneself into something.

ROBERT.

If one is brought up that way.

WILLIAM.

Tch! There's no sense in talking about it.

ROBERT.

Entirely my opinion.

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

WILLIAM.

It leads to nothing! (*Breaking out, quite beside himself*)
You all want to ruin me—I'm the victim of a
conspiracy! You're all in league against me; you
want to destroy me—you all want to destroy me—
utterly!

ROBERT.

Father's very words.

WILLIAM.

Ridiculous—Your remarks are simply ridiculous—Haven't
I reason enough for what I'm saying? Don't you
want to part me from Ida? It is—simply!—I
haven't words enough!—The absurdity of it! The
brutality beyond belief!—*I am to have pity on Ida!*
Who has pity on *me!*—Tell me that! Name me
any one person—who?

ROBERT.

Naturally!—When that's the way you speak, naturally!

WILLIAM.

The sacrifices demanded of me!—The most senseless
outrageous sacrifices! I'm—

ROBERT.

You can spare yourself the trouble of talking; if that's
the case—You are in your rights, keep the girl.

WILLIAM.

If that's the case! If what's the case, pray? Just tell
me!

ROBERT.

You spoke of—Ida a while ago—if I remember—

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

Well—what then ?

ROBERT.

Now it seems you're speaking of yourself—H'm, plainly—
if you are indifferent as to what becomes of the girl,
if you have the desirable dose of—well call it reck-
lessness—if you take her, as you would a new coat
or hat or something—

WILLIAM.

Robert!—Heartless through and through as you are—
you're right this time. I'm with you, out of this
place—That is, I'll go with you a little way, not
far, and now, now I've done with all of you—Yes,
yes, now I'm—don't speak!—now I've really done—
absolutely—(*Robert looks at him astonished, and
shrugs his shoulders. With increasing vehemence*)
Don't, don't trouble yourself—it's no good! You can't
do it—you can't take me in with your harmless quiet.
You're in the right, but what has put you in the
right, what has made you so clear-sighted? Shall I
tell you? Jealousy—miserable *jealousy*—nothing
else—simply pitiful malice!—You know very well
that I should fight honestly—try to be a little worthier
of her. You know very well that with her purity,
this girl has power to purify me!—But you don't
want that! You don't want to see me cleansed!—
Why not?—Because you—you yourself must always
be what you have been—because it is *me* she loves,
and never you! And so the whole evening you have
shadowed me with your detective looks—for ever

H

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

there to remind me you know me for what I am!
Yes! You are right!—I am sin-stained through and
through!—Nothing left of me is pure. Tainted, I
have nothing in common with her innocence—and I
am determined not to commit this crime. But you,
Robert!—That makes you none the purer; give
thanks that you no longer can feel shame!

*[Robert during the last part of William's speech has
taken his things and gone towards the door. He
stands, hand on the latch, as if going to speak.
Thinks better of it, shrugs his shoulders resignedly,
and goes out very quietly.]*

WILLIAM (*calling after him*).

Robert! Robert!

IDA (*coming from next room*).

Whom are you calling?

WILLIAM.

Ah, it's you.

IDA.

The doctor's there, William, he says it is very serious, it—
*[Voice of Mrs Scholz heard wailing, "My dear good
husband. Ah!—ah, my dear kind husband!"]*

WILLIAM.

What have I done! What have I done now?

IDA.

It crushes my heart. I would like not to ask you—but
something must—something's the matter, Willy!

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

Nothing. I want to be out there in solitude again. That is where I should be. Our place is there, Ida.

IDA.

Why?—I can't understand.

WILLIAM (*hastily and violently*).

Yes, yes, yes—the old story—: I don't understand, I don't understand!—Mother and father have spoken different languages all their lives; you don't understand, you don't *know* me! You have stale schoolgirl illusions and I have nothing more to do with all that, only to hide away from you, hide—hide away, until there's nothing of me but the miserable traitor and scoundrel—

[*Ida, after looking dazed at William, bursts into tears.*]

WILLIAM.

There, you see, this is my real self. I need only for one moment to forget my part, the part I play before you and my true self appears. You can't bear me as I really am. You cry, and you *would* cry, year out, year in, if I did not have pity on you.—No, Ida, it must come to an end between us. I've come to that fixed resolve.

IDA (*throwing herself on his neck*).

That's not true! That is not, that never *shall* be true.

WILLIAM.

Think what you have seen here to-day; shall we start the game afresh?—Shall we build this home again?

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

IDA.

It would be different ! It would be better, William.

WILLIAM.

How can you say that ?

IDA.

I *feel* it.

WILLIAM.

But you are throwing yourself to destruction, Ida ! I am dragging you to your ruin.

IDA.

I'm not afraid of that, William, not the least afraid ! Only have faith again ! Only give me your hand again ! Then I can be something to you.—Don't push me away.

WILLIAM.

Let me go!—You are in love for the first time!—You love an illusion. I have thrown myself in the gutter time after time. I have degraded womanhood with other women.—I am an outcast—

IDA (*sobbing and crying, embraces him*).

You are *mine*, you are *mine* !

WILLIAM.

I am not fit for you !

IDA.

Oh, *don't* say that ! I am so small before you, so small ! —Like a little, little moth. William, I am nothing without you—everything through you ;—don't take your hand away from me.—I am so lost without you.

ACT III. THE COMING OF PEACE

WILLIAM.

IDA!!! I—? I—

[They embrace and kiss between laughing and crying.]
I am not to take—my hand from you—what are you saying—what—why, you—bad—

IDA.

Now—promise me—now—

WILLIAM.

I swear to you now—

[A piercing scream from the next room cuts his words short. Startled and terrified they stand looking into each other's eyes. Voice of Mrs Scholz:—"My husband's dying, my dear good Fritz is dying, my husband!"—Loud crying.]

WILLIAM.

My God!—What?—Father!!! Father!!!

[Is about to rush into next room, Ida stops him.]

IDA.

William!—Control yourself, and—don't go without me.

[Friebe comes shaking with sobs out of the next room and disappears into the kitchen.]

AUGUSTA (*follows Friebe in; stopping in front of William, she moans at him.*)

Who—is to blame now, who—who?

[She sinks with head and arms on a table, a muffled moaning is wrung from her. Mrs Scholz is still heard crying loudly in next room.]

THE COMING OF PEACE ACT III.

WILLIAM (*breaking out*).

Augusta!

IDA (*her hands on William's breast, in trembling tones:*)

William—I think—your father—is dead.

[*William is again near an outbreak, but Ida calms him; he controls his emotion, possesses himself of Ida's hand, which he grips in his own, and hand in hand they go with firm and quiet steps out into the next room.*]

NOTES

Title-page. *The Coming of Peace*. This is a somewhat free translation of the title of Hauptmann's play. Friedensfest means literally the Feast or Festival of Peace, but the English title we have chosen seemed more euphonious and has besides a bearing on the end of the play, when the old man at any-rate enters into his rest.

P. 6. *O Gottogottogott!* The effect of this exclamation, which Mrs Scholz uses all through the play, cannot be reproduced in English. We have tried, in the translation, by joining the words with a hyphen, to give as far as might be the look of one word. Oh Godohgodohgod! would only have puzzled readers. Even in speaking, the change from the *t* to *d* makes the attempt to pronounce the exclamation as one word almost impossible. Moreover to English eyes and ears "Oh God" of course carries a weight quite incongruous in Mrs Scholz's chatter. Here, as in many other places, we were unable to arrive at an entirely satisfactory equivalent for the German.

P. 16. *That's an inhuman hand!* This cannot be called a translation. Mrs Scholz says: "Aus dem Grabe wachsen solche Hände!" She here alludes to an old German saying still quoted among the peasantry, which declares that the hand of anyone guilty of striking a parent would, after death, point upward from the grave in ceaseless self-accusation. We have been unable to find any similar superstition in English folk-lore.

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